UT AUSTIN'S SCHOOL OF INFORMATION

THE iSCHOOL RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR STORYARC EXPLORATION (iRISE)

A RESEARCH & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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https://sites.utexas.edu/ischool-rldp/storyarc-research-institute/

HOW TO CREATE A

HERE AT THE iSCHOOL...

WE EXPLORE SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST COMPLEX PROBLEMS

It's hard to think of a problem in today's world that doesn't include people, information, and technology. Learning at the intersection of the three, iSchool students are uniquely positioned to explore and address these complex issues.

OUR RESEARCH HAS REAL WORLD IMPLICATIONS

Informatics research provides insights that are relevant to folks from all walks of life. What we learn can empower designers, developers, policymakers, K-12 educators, parents and teens, librarians and archivists, community organizers, and more to make the world a better and fairer place.

BUT SILOS CAN BE A REAL BARRIER TO IMPACT

Silos, groups who work in isolation from one another, can limit our ability to create change. Organizations struggle to meet their goals when sales, engineering, IT, marketing, and finance teams operate separately with little alignment between them. In the same way, society can struggle to create positive change when academia, industry, government, and communities are so siloed.

HOW DO WE CONNECT RESEARCH INSIGHTS WITH THE LARGER WORLD?

Silos are a challenge at the heart of the intersection of people, information, and technology, which means Informatics students can be uniquely positioned to dismantle and build connections across them! But how?

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP & STORYTELLING

Learning to adapt how we reach, connect, collaborate, and communicate with our intended stakeholders based on their priorities, needs, and values can help us break down silos for real world impact. Skilled leaders have been transforming complex ideas into stories to build connection, generate buy-in, and motivate collective action for centuries.

iRISE takes students along this journey from inquiry to impact, empowering them to be the next generation of information leaders leveraging research, leadership, and storytelling for public good.

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What is iRISE?

Program Overview

The iSchool Research Institute for StoryArc Exploration (iRISE) is a **yearlong research and leadership development program.** Throughout the year, collaborative teams of undergraduates, PhD students, and faculty re-imagine how we **conduct, communicate, and amplify the impact of information research** through the stories we tell. **Spanning fall semester, spring semester, and a paid May institute**, each team designs and conducts a study at the intersection of people, information, and technology and **transforms the results into both an academic and public impact deliverable**. Throughout the process, students are immersed in hands-on **professional development curriculum** to emerge as an empowered next generation of information leaders.

Research as a Vehicle for Leadership Development & Social Impact

PROGRAM PILLARS

Hands-On Research Experience

This program re-imagines both the undergraduate research experience and the PhD student teaching and mentoring experience. Rather than working on a small piece of a pre-existing project, undergraduate and PhD students collaborate in teams to co-design and conduct their research from beginning to end, gaining hands-on experience across each phase of the research process (research problem, literature review, developing research questions, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination). For PhD students, this program provides hands-on teaching and mentoring experience, while simultaneously being immersed in a pedagogical and professional development environment where time is specifically carved to receive individualized feedback.

Immersive Leadership Development

As students conduct their research projects, they're immersed in curriculum that maps each phase of the research process to transferable professional skills they'll need to thrive post-graduation (e.g., project management, leadership styles, communication, time management, conflict resolution). This experience leverages hands-on research experience as a vehicle to develop professional skills and critical competencies (e.g., ethical and critical thinking) that are essential for the next generation of information leaders.

Communicating the "So What?"

Stories that change the world speak to multiple audiences. This program prioritizes learning how to communicate across silos (essential for Informatics graduates!). Throughout the year, students will learn how to structure narratives and practice communicating the "so what?" of each phase of their research to audiences and stakeholders with varying backgrounds, priorities, worldviews, degrees of technical skills, and knowledge bases. The program culminates with each team producing two deliverables:

- A conference paper to submit for peer-review to ensure rigor and publication for academic audiences.
- A Public Impact Deliverable (project-dependent) that transforms results and communicates the "so what?" to relevant stakeholders beyond academia (e.g., a social media campaign, policy one-sheet, school/community workshops, a graphic novel or zine).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COOL, BUT WHAT DOES THIS PROGRAM ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE FOR UNDERGRADS?

Fall 2025: 3 Credit, In-Person Class

Focus: Project Management & Research Design
Time: Mon/Wed 5:00-6:30pm
Summary: Students self-select into teams, compile a project management plan, and design their study. Teams will identify intended audience beyond academia and potential impact deliverable to communicate results.

Spring 2026: 3 Credit, In-Person Class

Focus: Data Collection & Analysis
Time: TBD (Will work to ensure time does not overlap w/ iSchool courses)
Summary: With university IRB approval ensuring research meets ethics requirements, teams will begin / complete data collection and analysis. They'll end with finalized results (i.e. answers to their research questions)!

May 2026: Paid, In-Person Institute

Focus: Communicating Research & Transforming Results
Details: May 5th – May 29th; students earn a $1,800 stipend, no credits
Summary: Teams will transform their projects into: 1) academic paper to submit for peer-reviewed publication (academic narrative), 2) A Public Impact Deliverable (translating results to non-academic audience).

WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF DOING THIS PROGRAM? (UNDERGRAD VERSION)

Our time is one of our most valuable resources, so it makes sense to think through if this would benefit you! Here are some of the core benefits of participating in the program - it's up to you to decide if these are aligned with your goals!

1

Hands-On Research Experience

In this program, you won't be working on a small piece of a faculty member's existing project. You'll be working in a team led by a PhD Student to co-design and conduct a study from start to finish. This level of ownership will help you develop a deep understanding of the what, why, and how behind research.

2

Real World Professional Skills

The program is structured for you to develop professional skills you'll need post-graduation. You'll work in sprints and each team member will do a rotation as Project Manager, while immersed in curriculum that covers time and conflict management, communication strategies, problem solving, and more.

3

Leadership Development

Skills are important to get a job, but we're thinking far beyond being an employee. This program explores the kinds of knowledge, attitude, behavior, critical thinking, and ethical foundations we need to lead in today's world. Perhaps most importantly, you'll learn how to communicate complex ideas to and generate buy-in from a wide array of diverse stakeholders.

4

Real World Impact

Every student in the program will be leaving with two concrete outcomes: 1) A submission to a peer-reviewed, international conference, and 2) a Public Impact Deliverable to extend the "so what?" of your research beyond academia.

5

Mentorship & Collaboration

Instead of a 15 week semester, you'll collaborate with your team, PhD Research Advisor, and Program Director for a year. This provides the opportunity for multiple levels of mentorship, recurring individualized feedback, and career planning.

Okay, But How Do These Projects Actually Work? (Undergraduate Version)

This program is designed to promote a win-win environment that encourages all parties to be actively engaged and benefit in ways that align with their goals. That includes how the research projects are developed.

In the beginning of Fall Semester, each Graduate Research Advisor (GRA) will present 2-3 research project ideas that they would be interested in working on with undergraduate students in this program. These proposed project ideas will be within the GRAs research area, but will have areas of flexibility in terms of the exact topic and how the research is done.

After each GRA presents their potential projects, the Program Director will run a series of workshops and exercises to help undergraduate students self-select into teams and choose their advisors/projects.

This process ensures that the research aligns with their areas of expertise and goals, AND that undergraduate students on the team have some ownership in shaping the details of the project (you'll want to be interested in the work to stay engaged for a year!).

Proposed Project Example: Navigating Boundaries & Flexibility

Let's say a GRA's research interests include mental health, mobile tech, and marginalized populations' information behavior. They may say they're flexible in mobile tech type (social media platforms, self-tracking apps, etc.) and specific user population demographics, but the projects need to stay within the topical bounds of anxiety and depression and use qualitative methods.

Okay, so how does the project play out over the course of a year?

Fall Semester (Weeks 1 & 2): GRAs will present their 2-3 potential projects and answer students' questions. Undergraduates will work with the Program Director to self-select into teams of 3-5. From there, you and your team will select and scope the project and (with the support of the Director) develop a project management plan and team contract.

Fall will be dedicated to learning and applying project management skills to the beginning of the research process. This includes the literature review, research question development, study design, and submission to the IRB. The Director will work with each team, as well as mentor the GRAs on how to work with their groups.

Spring Semester: Dedicated to data collection and analysis. Teams will end the semester with written results. Don't worry if things go awry in this process (delays in IRB approval, struggles with recruitment, etc.). Instead, anticipate that unexpected challenges will arise and the Director will help you and your team problem solve. Learning how to adjust and keep the team morale high is a deeply valuable skill whether you want to go into academia, industry, government, etc.

Okay, But How Do These Projects Actually Work? (Undergraduate Version Continued)

Throughout both the fall and spring semesters, you'll be immersed in leadership development curriculum.

May: In May, you'll participate in the four week "So What?" Institute, which functions like a condensed Monday - Friday internship. In the morning, you'll participate in a professional development workshop with your cohort and the Program Director. For the rest of the day, you'll be working on your academic and Public Impact Deliverable (see later sections for more details). A meal will be provided each day.

At the end of May, there will be a ceremony celebrating your completion of the yearlong program!

May Institute Structure

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM **Professional Development Workshop**
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM **Working Block**
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM **Lunch**
2:00 - 5:00 PM **Working Block**

Fall & Spring Class Structure

Time	Monday	Wednesday
3:30pm		**Block B: PhD Students Only**
4:00pm		
4:30pm		
5:00pm	**Block A: Undergraduate Students Only**	**Block C: Undergraduate & PhD Students Together**
5:30pm		
6:00pm		
6:30pm		

Note: This is the class time for fall semester. The days/times may change for spring semester. We will schedule to avoid overlap with other iSchool courses.

Okay, so how does the project play out over the course of a year?

Fall & Spring Semesters: This is an in-person Directed Research course taught by Dr. Booth in the fall and spring (3 credits each).

Once admitted into the program, you will be able to register for the fall course before the semester starts. Please note that the times listed on the left are for fall. For spring, the structure will remain the same, but the day/times may change. We will do our absolute best to schedule around other iSchool courses so no one has to forego a class they really want to take.

May: In-person, four week, paid working institute, not a class (no enrollment, no tuition, no class credit). One group meal will be provided each work day.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Eligibility (Undergrads)

Informatics Majors or Minors

Enrolled as an Informatics Major/Minor at time of application

Have Completed and Passed I305

Majors: Completed I305 or equivalent course

Minors: Completed I305 in the iSchool

Enrolled as a Full Time Student

Enrolled full time for '25-'26 academic year (no December '25 grads)

Trying to decide if this program is right for you? Take a look at both eligibility and fit. We want students who participate in this program to enjoy it! Here's who will thrive in this program:

HOW TO APPLY

Undergraduate Applications

Application Form

Open the application form (linked here). Be sure to read the instructions (linked here). This form includes a few multiple choice and short answer questions. This form is also where you'll upload your short essay responses and unofficial transcripts (see below).

Short Essays

In the application form, please upload a single document with your responses to the two essay questions listed. Please limit your responses to 600 words per question (so a document with no more than 1,200 words total) and save the file with your first and last name in the title.

UT Academic Summary

In the application form, please upload your UT Academic Summary. If you transferred from another college/university, please include unofficial transcripts from that institution. Please do NOT pay for official transcripts!

Due August 6th by 11:59pm CT

Two Deliverables: Moving From Inquiry to Impact

It's May. You've been working on your research project all year. And now you finally have results from your study (i.e. answers to your research questions!). Cool cool cool, but so what? Now it's time to put the pieces together to really understand what you did, what you found, and why it matters.

Does this new knowledge matter in the world beyond the classroom? How will you identify relevant stakeholders, appropriate mediums, and communicate to folks with a wide array of backgrounds, priorities, worldviews, degrees of technical skills, and knowledge bases? How will you adjust the story you're telling to different audiences?

These are skills every information professional - from UX Designers to Data Analysts to Product Managers to Librarians, to Archivists and beyond - should build to set themselves apart!

You and your team will practice these skills by transforming your research into two deliverables for dramatically different audiences.

Deliverable 1: A Research Paper You'll Submit for Peer-Reviewed Publication

You and your team will learn how to write and frame your research for an academic audience. If accepted, the team will have the opportunity to present at an international conference.

Deliverable 2: Public Impact Deliverable

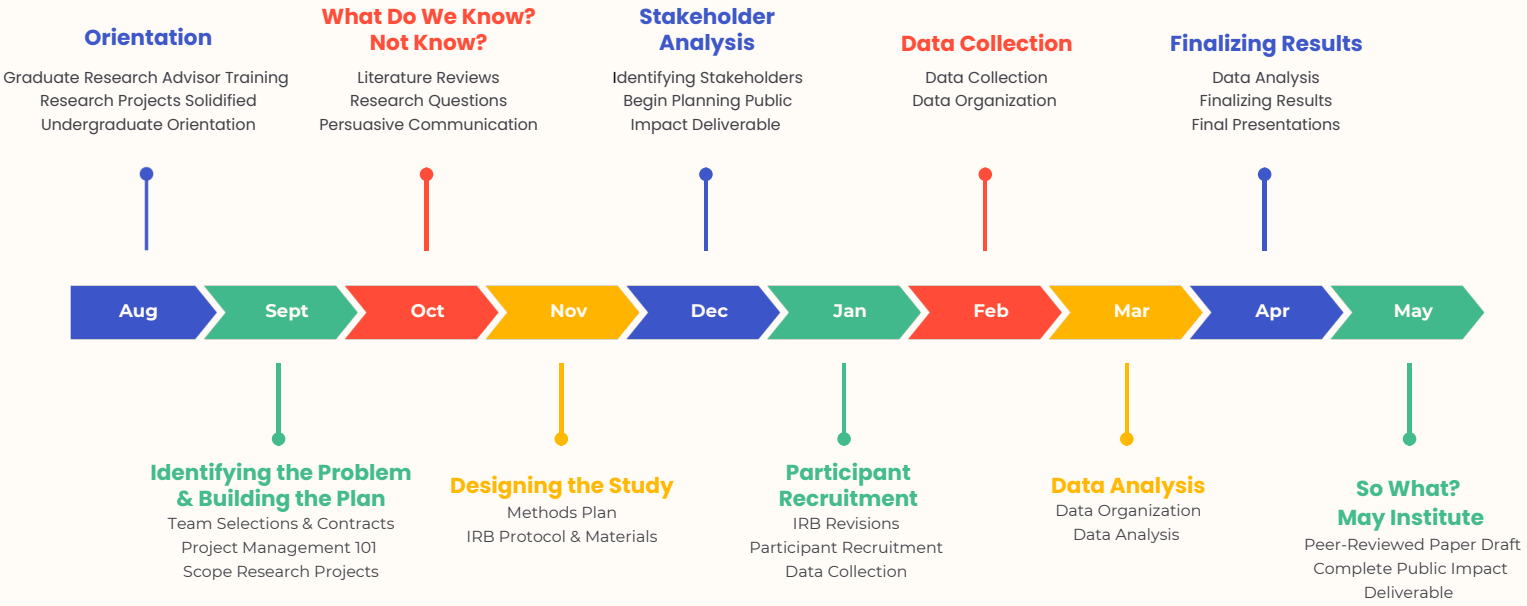
Informatics research is relevant to so many - what about stakeholders beyond academia? How can we connect what happens here with designers, developers, educators, librarians, community organizers, parents, teens, etc.?

Public Impact Deliverable Options

Impact Deliverable Type	Description	Informatics Examples
Research Remix	Transforming research into creative output. Think zines, graphic short story, short film, social media campaign, etc. (Great for broader stakeholder groups like "teens on TikTok")	Dr. Eileen Trauth (Penn State) transformed her research about the underrepresentation of women in tech into a play for high school students Dr. Joe Sanchez (Queens College) designed a social media campaign and TikTok account to communicate the "so what?" of his research about BIPOC youth and manga to non-academic audiences
Practical Product	Transforming findings into useful products or tools. Think a policy one-sheet, best practices infographic, K-12 curriculum activities, etc. (Great for specific stakeholder groups who have established expectations/norms for how they receive and interact with information)	Dr. Andrea Tapia (Penn State) transformed her research on barriers in technical crisis coordination for natural disaster relief into best practices and principles for over 300 Humanitarian Information Managers worldwide (The United Nations Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs adopted these best practices in their Information Management policies!) Dr. Kayla Booth (UT Austin) works with high schools around the country to develop health class curriculum (lesson plans, class activities, workshops, etc.) based on her research about teens, mental health, fitness, and social media
Engagement Artifact	Creating something physical or virtual for people to interact with. Think games, simulations, virtual experiences, etc. (Great for teaching the general public or training employees/ volunteers)	Dr. Ricardo Gomez (University of Washington) co-designed a card game with and for humanitarian organizations and libraries to train employees on information practices that better protect the privacy of migrants and vulnerable populations they serve Undergraduate students in the iSchool Inclusion Institute (a program like this!) adapted their research to co-design an interactive trivia game for *The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.

TIMELINE & ANTICIPATED QUESTIONS

Program Timeline (2025-2026)



Anticipated Questions (Undergraduate Version)

What if I don't have any research experience?

You don't need to have any experience! That's what this program is designed for - to help you get hands-on research experience!

Do I have to do the May Institute?

Yes. The May Institute is a core component of the program. We specifically have the undergraduate portion of the summer only lasting from May 5th - May 29th. This is to ensure students can still do June - August internships and also consider leases that end in May.

QUESTIONS?

Reach out to Dr. Booth!

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