

**Title:** Technology Test Kitchen “Iron Chef Challenge” (This title is likely to change, “Iron Chef” is probably trademark infringement.)

**What:** A series of four events where teams of students compete to propose solutions to a given problem. The first three events are considered preliminary rounds and the winners of each round go on to the fourth, final round. The winning teams of each preliminary round will be awarded a prize, and a grand prize awarded to the winners of the final round. In each round, teams have 15-20 minutes to brainstorm and develop a rough proposal for solving the prompted problem. Solutions are judged by 4 expert judges, with audience vote counting as the 5<sup>th</sup> judge in case of a tie. Judges will provide constructive feedback for each team’s proposal after the winner has been selected. Prompts will be designed based on real-life scenarios mined from various feedback sources, i.e. letters to the editor of the Shorthorn, comments and complaints logged with the University, etc. For assessment purposes, competitors will complete a self-evaluation both before and after their participation in the Challenge, providing data about their comfort and ability working in teams, writing proposals, technical communication, creative thinking, critical thinking and other topics identified as useful for the competition coordinator.

**Who:** Teams are comprised of three or four students each. Participants self-select by registering to compete and are placed in teams by the competition coordinator. The competition coordinator will assemble the teams with the goal of having diverse membership in each team. Expert judges will be selected and invited based on the subject-matter of the prompt. The pool of judges will include local community and business leaders, UTA faculty, Peer Academic Leaders, and others identified appropriate for the topic. The audience will serve as the 5<sup>th</sup> judge, by way of aggregate vote, and will include anyone who happens to be attending the events. There will also be an MC who will deliver the prompts, and interact with the audience while the contestants work on their proposals. The competition coordinator is myself, and I will be consulting and requesting assistance from members of the Library’s Experiential Learning Department and our “Experience @ UTA Libraries Series” planning team. I will also seek consultation with the Library’s Director of Library Systems and Technology to ensure that we have the needed technology resources in place for the competition (i.e. a wireless microphone for the MC, workstations and displays for the competitors, etc.). Lastly, I will seek consultation with the Strategic Initiatives Coordinator at the UTA Startup Lounge to help identify judges. The Strategic Initiatives Coordinator has strong relationships with local community and business leaders.

**When:** Rounds will take place on the four Wednesdays in April 2017 (5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>), between noon and 1:00. This is the regular time slot for the UTA Central Library’s “Experience @ UTA Libraries Series”. Marketing of the events and solicitations for competitors will begin in February. Each round will begin with brief introductions of the judges, followed by delivery of the prompt to the competitors by the MC. Once the competitors begin their work, the MC will provide the audience some information about each team (names, majors, year, etc.) The MC will initiate small-talk with the judges and with audience members while the competitors continue their work. After 15-20 minutes, the teams will cease their work and present their solutions to the judges, one at a time. During this time audience members may vote for their favorite team using their wireless devices and a voting website or app. Judges will spend a few minutes questioning the contestants and reviewing the work before casting their votes. In the case of a tie, the aggregated audience vote will be the tie breaker. Once the winner is selected, the judges use the remaining time to provide constructive feedback to the teams.

**Where:** The location is yet to be decided. The “Experience @ UTA Libraries” events are usually hosted in the UTA FabLab, on the first floor of Central Library. Because of that location’s high-visibility, casual

passers-by in the library are more likely to see the event and wonder what is going on, and be more inclined to come check it out. The FabLab, a vibrant and heavily used space, provides a captive audience with its regular users. This scenario allows us to rely less on heavy marketing of the event, even though we still try our best to market the events well. Other less-visible locations that may serve as alternate sites are the two technology classrooms in the Central Library, the Atrium and Parlor in Central Library, and the Startup Lounge. If held in any of these locations, we would have to rely more on marketing because these sites are less visible to casual passers-by. However, these locations may be more suited to this type of event due to their layout and readily available technology. The planning team will take all of this into consideration. Whatever site we select, it will need to have ample space for four long tables for the teams to sit at, a long table for the judges to sit at and take notes, and plenty of extra space for audience members. The tables for the teams will need to be able to accommodate space and power for at least one laptop device and a publicly visible display either on the table or mounted overhead. This allows judges and audience to watch the teams' thought processes and planning as it is in progress.

**Why:** Project design, technical communication and the ability to work in diverse interdisciplinary teams are three transferrable skills highly sought by employers. This series of events provides opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, subject disciplines and levels of experience to work together in teams in a fun, fast-paced, cooperative way, while giving them a glimpse into the process of writing competitive project proposals. The interaction will help them learn to communicate with each other, and with the judges and audience. Additionally, this type of activity encourages students to "think on their feet" critically and creatively, which are also recognized as useful transferable skills by employers. And lastly, we will be putting students on the spot and forcing them to work together with strangers, but in a safe, low-risk environment and with positive constructive criticism that will help them prepare for less-safe, higher-risk environments. We hope to show through program assessment that students feel more comfortable and confident in the identified skill categories after having participated in the Challenge. I plan to publish the details of this activity and its assessment in the UTA Library Research Commons or in an upcoming MavOpenPress journal, and possibly in other OA venues/forums, as part of my participation in the 2016-2017 UTA Professional Learning Community on Digital Scholarship and Pedagogy.