



# How to Participate in a Challenge

Challenges, often sponsored by businesses, help students learn from experts and gain experience with exploratory and applied research. Work with interdisciplinary teams to imagine solutions to global issues.

## FIND OPPORTUNITIES ON AND OFF CAMPUS

What are you interested in working on? Keep an eye out for opportunities and be open to everything within and beyond your discipline. Search for domestic and international opportunities held by professional organizations, multinational businesses, and government agencies. Sign up for newsletters, mailing lists, and follow social media feeds; calls and competitions are posted online. Join research groups, teams, or clubs who have participated in previous open competitions, research challenges, hackathons or similar events. Ask around before/after lectures, in campus clubs, or in volunteer groups to find the right opportunity. Many faculty members are involved with current events in their research field, and potentially can connect you with existing challenges, hackathons or similar opportunities. Identify a couple of potential challenge opportunities.

## FIND STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Once you've found your opportunity, build the team. Find students with similar goals but diverse academic backgrounds, interests and goals to foster a community of diversity, communication, and awareness. Many research conferences or challenges focus on interdisciplinary topics and a group of peers with a diverse skillset will allow you to learn and grow as a researcher. Seek out current or past students, teaching assistants, faculty members or mentors, or put out a call on social media. Think broadly – you may need people with artistic, communication, podcast, video, or animation skills to give that great edge. A team where everyone has technical skills in one specific discipline won't be enough to win a large, interdisciplinary challenge! If you are building a team for a competition, reach out to the campus or community newspaper – a story about your challenge may generate publicity, interest, and more team members.

## GET YOUR NAME OUT THERE

Most challenges and hackathons require you and your group to apply. Many challenges are one-time events with short registration or submission deadlines, but some are recurring, regular or annual challenges. If you need funding, contact your university or research institution, government agencies or organizations that exist in your field to analyze your options. Others just need a short, intense time commitment from your team – make sure everyone can commit! Winning is nice, but it's not really that important. Experience in innovating, collaborating, and connecting with others by participating in a research challenge can bolster your profile personally, academically and professionally. Make sure to talk about your challenge, competition or hackathon work on social media, add it to your LinkedIn, and put it on your resume – it is exploratory and applied excellence put to action!