

PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY NETWORK



PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY NETWORK (PIT-UN)

Overview

Launched in 2019, the **Public Interest Technology University Network** is a partnership that unites colleges and universities committed to building the nascent field of public interest technology and growing a new generation of civic-minded technologists. Through the development of curricula, research agendas, and experiential learning programs in the public interest technology space, these institutions aim to develop graduates with skills and knowledge at the intersection of technology and policy. **By joining PIT-UN, members commit to:**

Field Building on Campus—Members may choose to focus on some or all of the activities below, in addition to other initiatives to build the field of public interest technology on campus:

- A. Support curriculum and faculty development to enable interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary education of students, so they can critically assess the ethical, political, and societal implications of new technologies, and design technologies in service of the public good.
- B. Develop experiential learning opportunities such as clinics, fellowships, apprenticeships, and internships, with public and private sector partners in the public interest technology space.
- C. Find ways to support graduates who pursue careers working in public interest technology, recognizing that financial considerations may make careers in this area unaffordable to many.
- D. Create mechanisms for faculty to receive recognition for the research, curriculum development, teaching, and service work needed to build public interest technology as an arena of inquiry.
- E. Provide institutional data that will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our interventions in helping to develop the field of public interest technology.

Liaison Activities—Designated university/college liaisons and Network staff will meet at least quarterly, either in person or via teleconference. Quarterly meetings will include reporting on field building activities as well as opportunities to work on the following three areas as a Network:

1. **Annual Convening**—university/college liaisons and any participating faculty member will help to facilitate the formal annual convening to discuss programmatic progress, lessons learned, future planning, and strategies for success with Network members.
2. **Communications**—aid in telling the stories of public interest technology by actively engaging with your school's PR/marketing team along with PIT-UN membership to highlight and celebrate researchers, faculty, and students advancing the public good.
3. **Membership Engagement**—members must serve on one of our Standing Committees and a Working Group. Members will be assigned to a Working Group based on their focus area, and can select their own Standing Committee assignment. These positions will take effect in January 2021.

PIT-UN Members

Arizona State University
Boston University
Cal Poly State University
Carnegie Mellon University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Florida International University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgetown University
George Washington University
Georgia State University
Harvard University

Howard University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Miami Dade College
Nazareth College
New York University
Olin College of Engineering
Pepperdine University
Princeton University
Pardee RAND Graduate School
Rochester Institute of Technology
Stanford University
The City University of New York

The University of Texas at Austin
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Arizona
University of Chicago
University of Michigan
University of Pennsylvania
University of the South
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Virginia Tech
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

2021 Application Process

Defining Public Interest Technology in Academia¹

Public interest technology refers to the study and application of technology expertise to advance the public interest/generate public benefits/promote the public good.

This definition underscores three very important points. For our purposes, we propose to define technology expertise more broadly than engineering. Technology expertise refers to a set of capabilities to create, apply, study, and use new technologies and an understanding of the core ethical, legal, policy, and societal dimensions of technological change. As technology becomes more of a governing force through its own design and uptake and its literal use by governments to govern, we need to cultivate a set of experts who can both wield the tools of the relevant technical domains and assess their social and political implications. We think of this mix as a body of knowledge that enables the development, application, and study of technologies with attention to the social and political possibilities of their design and use, but that also can be applied analytically in the policymaking process.

Second, the definition is specific about the purpose which is sought by the application of technology expertise. The emphasis is on a notion of public interest or common good, as distinguished from the design of technology or technology policy to advance commercial or individual goals and interests. The public interest – while difficult to define – is understood to reflect the welfare of society in general, rather than the welfare of a particular individual, group, or company. Government and civil society are seen as playing primary roles in advancing societal objectives, though other sectors often play a role as well. While this definition clearly includes the deployment of new technologies on behalf of public policy priorities, it also creates space for a shared recognition (by the private and public sectors) of the responsibility to critically assess the benefits and risks of the new technologies that are created and used, and to incorporate technical knowledge into the formulation of laws, regulations, and policies. This means that efforts to constrain the “bad” use of technology or to mitigate the harmful impacts of technology are also a part of the field.

Third, the definition specifically calls out a systematic way of studying technology in the world – including unforeseen and adverse consequences and ways to harmonize technology and society. It is a study of the societal experiences imposed by technology design as well as ways to use technology design to harmonize and impact governance and society.

¹ Created by David Eaves, Kennedy School, Harvard University; Ed Felten, Computer Science and Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; Tara McGuinness, New America; Deirdre K. Mulligan, School of Information, U.C. Berkeley; and Jeremy Weinstein, Political Science, Stanford University

PIT-UN Membership Goals

The goal of PIT-UN is to increase the breadth and depth of university-based programs in public interest technology. Within the next five years, we would like to see PIT-UN grow to encompass the wide range of accredited non-profit U.S.-based institutions of higher education. However, these first few years of PIT-UN are both experiential and foundational setting, helping to chart a course for the development and expansion of an academic association committed to the field of public interest technology - both inside and outside of the classroom.

In 2021, PIT-UN seeks to add new members that will allow us to continue to pilot and test the types of projects and initiatives that will have success within academia. In addition, we are committed to increasing the diversity of our members within these key areas:

- **Racial and ethnic minority students:** Universities/colleges that serve student populations such as African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Latinos, traditionally underrepresented in technology and policy careers.
- **Regional:** Universities/colleges across the four regions of the US, particularly the Northwest and the South.
- **Institution type:** Universities/colleges including community colleges, art and design schools, institutes of technology, small liberal arts, as well as large scale public institutions.
- **Field Building area:** Field building focus areas outside of those proposed by current members, including the option of proposing new ones to be considered.

PIT-UN Members Benefits:

1. Participation in a learning community of scholars and practitioners seeking to prepare civic-minded technologists and leaders.
2. Opportunities to apply for grant funding offered only to Network members.
3. Complimentary registration and attendance by Network liaison at an annual convening to discuss shared challenges and goals.
4. Exclusive access to toolkits and resources that are available for members only.
5. Ability to serve as a thought leader in public interest technology through PIT-UN online and in-person platforms including media briefings, monthly speaker series, newsletters, and conferences

PIT-UN Eligibility Criteria:

Provost/Presidential Level Support:

Senior leadership fully supports public interest technology as a priority area of the institution and the mission and can demonstrate a willingness to indicate how the institution's mission and goals align with the aims of PIT-UN. Examples of senior leadership support includes an agreement to meet annually with senior leadership within PIT-UN and to publicly support PIT initiatives that take place on the campus/university. Applicants should be able to find evidence of institutional support of PIT-UN via its strategic plans and its institutional communications.

Designee and Team Support:

Institution can identify two to three faculty, staff and/or administrators who have been given a mandate to pursue PIT within their departments and across the university or college. The identification of a designee with the capacity to work across departments; a track record of delivering programs/services that align with PIT's goals; and an ability to access a team of other individuals across the institution who can support PIT and PIT-UN including university communications, student career services, or development. Please be prepared to provide contact names for these individuals who should be included in the PIT efforts of your institution.

History of interdisciplinary Education:

Institution supports curricular and co-curricular programming and research that connect departments and disciplines across the campus/university/college. The institution shows a readiness to offer programming that embraces the value of experiential learning, so that we can evidence of students being given the capacity to see the real world applications of their learnings. The institution has or plans to offer course sequences, such as a major, minor, certificate, or degree which reflects public interest technology across multiple departments or schools on campus.

Timeline

- **Sept 21:** Online application process opens
- **Nov 30:** Application Deadline.
- **Nov - Dec:** Applications reviewed.
- **January 2021:** Cohort announced.

How to Apply

Interested educational institutions will submit their application via the Foundant platform.

Below are instructions for creating an account in order to start the application. Please direct questions regarding the online process or the development of your application to <mailto:pituninfo@newamerica.org>

Registration Instructions

1. You may access the system at the following link:
<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=PIT>
2. Select **Create a New Account**. This will prompt you to fill out a profile about your institution. Please create only one account per institution.
3. Once your profile is complete, you are now ready to apply to PIT-UN. Click on **Apply** in the upper left corner of the page.
4. You can work on your application, save it, and return to it at any time. The system will auto save every 20 minutes, but please remember to save your work, regularly. You can use this document to prepare your online application.

PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY NETWORK



2021 PIT-UN APPLICATION

INSTITUTION CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name:
Title:
University/College Name:
Email Address:
Phone Number:
Mailing Address:
City:
State/Province:
Postal Code:

DESIGNEE INFORMATION

Designee Name (s):
Title:
Department/School:

Support Team for PIT

Please identify individuals that will support the designee from the following departments:

Communications

Full Name:
Title:
Email:

Development/Foundation

Relations
Full Name:
Title:
Email:

Career Counseling/Career Services

Full Name:
Title:
Email:

Network members are eligible to participate in the Network Challenge, a grants program to support the development of Public Interest Technology within academia by encouraging new ideas, fostering collaborations, and incentivizing resource- and information-sharing among network members. **Please provide the name of your grants management contact or the person responsible for limited submissions application below:**

Full Name:
Title:
Email:

SCHOOL PROFILE INFORMATION (0-50 points)

PIT-UN seeks to strategically add new members that will allow us to pilot and test the types of projects and initiatives that will have success within academia across a number of institutional types. Please use this section to tell us more about your institutional profile.

Region:

- Midwest
- North
- South
- West

Type of Institution:

- Minority Serving Institution (MSI)
- Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)

Sector:

- Public
- Private

Special Focus Institution:

(Check all that apply)

- Faith-Related Institution
- Engineering School
- Other Technology-Related School
- Business & Management School
- Arts, Music & Design School
- Other Special Focus Institution, please describe:

Level:

- 2- year
- 4- year
- Both

Student population to be served:

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Both

Field Building Focus Area:

(Check all that apply)

- A. Curriculum and faculty development to enable interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary education & research.
- B. Experiential learning opportunities such as clinics, fellowship, apprenticeships and internships.
- C. Financial support of graduates who pursue careers in public interest technology.
- D. Faculty recognition for research, curriculum development, teaching, and service work within public interest technology
- E. Use of institutional data to measure effectiveness of PIT intervention strategies.

PITUN READINESS (All questions are required)

Please attach your response to the following questions (no more than 4 pages total, single or double spaced, 12 pt):

1. *The Network Seeks to Support Established/Growing Programs:* Please describe your current and planned initiatives or strategies in public interest technology using the “Defining Public Interest Technology in Academia” framework and the five field building areas outlined. **(0-20 points)**
2. *The Network Seeks to Support Programs that Have Senior Administrative Support:* Please describe the support you are receiving from your president and/or provost. Examples of senior leadership support includes an agreement to meet annually with senior leadership within PITUN and to publicly support PIT initiatives that take place on the campus/university. Applicants should be able to find evidence of institutional support of PITUN via its strategic plans and its institutional communications. **(0-20 points)**
3. *The Network Seeks to Promote this Field of Study, Research, and Practice:* Please describe your institution’s ability to promote/communicate the work you’re doing both within your university/college, to your discipline, and the broader public. **(0-20 points)**
4. *The Network Seeks to Learn from Its Members:* Identify the challenges and successes you encountered in your efforts to pursue public interest technology at your college/university. What strategies have you employed to overcome or navigate them? What have your successes demonstrated about your institution's capacity to do this work? **(0-15 points)**
5. *The Network Seeks to Support Its Members:* How would membership in PITUN impact your efforts? **(0-10 points)**
6. *The Network Seeks to Diversify its Membership along a Number of Parameters:* How will your institution enhance the make-up of the Network's membership specifically as it relates to students served, area of the country, type of institution, and field building areas? Of the list of current members, with whom would you like to collaborate and why? **(0-15 points)**

Applicants may attach no more than 10 pages of supporting documents such as excerpts of strategic plans, department overviews, or marketing materials.