

Doers. Changemakers. Entrepreneurs. Innovators.

AEI sparks innovation, fosters new jobs, and cultivates thriving businesses. From **startup** to **success**, AEI is dedicated to propelling enterprises forward with research-backed best practices.

entrepreneurship.ua.edu



Helping New and Established Enterprises Take Off

The Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute (AEI) connects University of Alabama students, faculty, and staff with investors, business leaders, and community partners who support innovation and entrepreneurship. Through programs, research, and on- and off-campus incubator spaces, AEI helps turn ideas into new businesses, jobs, and real-world impact while sharing research-based best practices.

AEI supports entrepreneurs at every stage, from early ideas to growing enterprises. AEI offers hands-on learning beyond the classroom through consulting projects, startup teams, competitions, and networking events. Students gain practical experience through boot camps and mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs and business executives, helping move ideas forward faster.



150+

Current and Graduated
EDGE Tenants

Over

\$1 million

in Business Plan
**Prize Money
Distributed**

600+

River Pitch
Contestants

Crimson Venture Fund Accelerator and Angel Network

CRIMSON ACCELERATOR

Backing startup companies with money from the Venture Fund (\$25k or \$50k investments) and providing coaching and additional support in exchange for a SAFE agreement. Any funding that comes back from the SAFE agreements will be used to support more startups at UA. Our latest offering provides the needed funding to help our startups stay in Alabama to grow their businesses.

CRIMSON ANGEL NETWORK

Allows friends of UA to support our entrepreneurs through personal investments of any size. Learn more at alabama.letsplaymoney.com.



Image Credits:
City Detect

City Detect—one of two companies in AEI's first accelerator pilot. In 2026, City Detect raised \$13.5 million in their series A round.



Our Home Away from Home: The EDGE

Tuscaloosa's Home for Startups

THE EDGE

The EDGE, a 26,300 square foot building, is a partnership between the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the City of Tuscaloosa, and The University of Alabama. The EDGE supports UA students, faculty, alumni, and community entrepreneurs by helping them evaluate ideas, commercialize innovations, build startups, and grow businesses. EDGE members are business leaders committed to developing talent, sharing expertise, and collaborating with the UA innovation community.

The EDGE provides entrepreneurs with office space, co-working space, and access to other resources to help them grow. The EDGE also rents several spaces and rooms to businesses that need space for programs and off-site meetings. To learn more contact aei@ua.edu or visit aei.culverhouse.ua.edu/the-edge/



The EDGE features 26K square feet of co-working, collaboration, and events space, with 20+ offices, 100 workstations, as well as conference rooms.

Additional Startup Resources

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & NONPROFIT CLINIC AT THE UA SCHOOL OF LAW

The Entrepreneurship & Nonprofit Clinic provides free transactional legal services and counseling to individuals and organizations in Tuscaloosa and the surrounding counties.

ALABAMA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Alabama Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network at The University of Alabama enhances economic growth by providing management and technical assistance to small businesses across the state. Professional Business Advisors are available for confidential, one-on-one, and no cost assistance for business start-up, growth, access to capital, international trade, and government contracting.

THE CUBE

The Cube is an on-campus makers space that is open to all students, faculty, and staff on campus to test the bounds of additive manufacturing. The Cube is operated by the Lee J. Styslinger, Jr. College of Engineering and housed in H.M.Comer Hall.

KENNEMER CENTER FOR INNOVATION AT THE HONORS COLLEGE – BIG IDEAS

BIG Ideas is an entry-level program that encourages students who have limited competition experience to develop their ideas, transform their thinking, and address problems through creativity and ingenuity.

LEVITETZ LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN NEW COLLEGE

Providing seed grants and stipends for unpaid summer internships, the LLP provides University of Alabama students financial resources to gain real-world experience in developing businesses, creative activities, and social entrepreneurship programs.

A Magnet for Innovators, Inventors, and Entrepreneurs

AEI sponsors a number of events each year focused on creating opportunities for UA entrepreneurs to realize their goals. Students at The University of Alabama, as well as faculty and staff, and members of the West Alabama community can test their ideas with AEI through a multitude of competitions and workshops including:



GROWTH & INNOVATION LEADERS FORUM

The Growth & Innovation Leaders Forum connects business leaders, faculty, and students to explore leadership approaches to organizational expansion. The Forum emphasizes shared learning, hands-on education, and research to develop practical strategies for stronger organizations.

ANNUAL GROWTH & INNOVATION SUMMIT

A one-day, data-driven workshop for presidents, CEOs, and leadership teams. The Summit features hands-on exercises, live case studies, and diagnostic tools, led by faculty and senior executives.

THE CRIMSON ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACADEMY (CEA)

A nine-week summer pre-accelerator program that helps aspiring entrepreneurs develop and test business ideas through mentorship, hands-on work, and networking. CEA builds confidence, skills, and connections in a structured launch environment.

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

A worldwide celebration of entrepreneurship held each November, featuring events and competitions in more than 160 countries. Powered by the Kauffman Foundation, the initiative connects participants with mentors, collaborators, and investors. AEI runs two local events that week: the River Pitch competition and Demo Day.



AEI Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year Award

On April 9, 2026, AEI honored its first annual Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year Award at a luncheon held at the EDGE, Tuscaloosa's home for startups. The inaugural event featured two award winners, Young Alumni Entrepreneur of the year and Distinguished Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year.

Competitions, Workshops, and Programs

FACULTY AND STAFF INNOVATION PITCH COMPETITION

UA faculty and staff compete for up to \$55,000 in funding by submitting a 3-minute pitch and participating in a Q&A with judges. UA is unique in its offering an all-employee innovation competition.

RIVER PITCH COMPETITION

Early-stage entrepreneurs pitch new ideas, receive expert feedback, and compete for one of ten \$1,000 prizes while making valuable connections. With an audience of about 150 people, AEI hosts about 70 different people pitching new ideas at this event.

EDWARD K. ALDAG, JR. STUDENT BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Student entrepreneurs pitch their business plans to a panel of judges, receive feedback and compete for cash prizes. In 2026, a total of 96 student teams registered to compete. 62 made the cut to compete in round 2. Of those teams, 27 won prizes for their ideas. One team wins the annual grand prize of \$50,000.

DEMO DAY

Network with local startups and learn about companies based in West Alabama. Entrepreneurs will showcase their businesses and hold workshops.

COMMUNITY BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

The business plan challenge provides local entrepreneurs with the opportunity to present a 10-minute business plan. Entrepreneurs compete for cash prizes.

Students can test their ideas through additional competitions and workshops listed below:

Levitetz Program at New College

Kenner Center for Innovation at the Honors College

NSF I-Corp Crimson Startup

Collegiate Entrepreneur's Organization

Tuscaloosa Innovative Community Business Plan Competition

Engineering Entrepreneurship Program

Entrepreneur Resource Groups



GROWTH &
INNOVATION
LEADERS FORUM





Get Involved with AEI: Partnership Opportunities

Through programming, research, and the use of incubator spaces on and off-campus, AEI spurs the growth of innovation, new jobs, and businesses, as well as sharing research-based best practices.

If you're interested in supporting the growth of entrepreneurship and innovation at AEI, we encourage you to get involved through donating, joining the programs, or participating in our upcoming events. Your engagement helps us empower new businesses, foster research, and create impactful learning opportunities for our community. Reach out today to aei@ua.edu discover partnership opportunities and make a difference.

**Bringing established, startup
and mid-size companies together
to learn, grow and innovate.**



AEI Associates

AEI Associates come from numerous colleges and units at UA. They play a vital role in fostering entrepreneurship and innovation at The University of Alabama. They actively mentor students, participate in competitions and workshops, and contribute to research on growth and innovation. Additionally, they collaborate on developing new programs and provide valuable input to enhance AEI's offerings for students, faculty, and the community.





Alabama
Entrepreneurship
Institute

Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute
The EDGE
2627 10th Avenue
Tuscaloosa, 35401

Get involved and learn more at
entrepreneurship.ua.edu

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Support AEI

If you are interested in contributing to AEI programs, including funding, donating time to coach, judge or speak at a workshop, please contact Dr. Theresa Welbourne at tmwelbourne@ua.edu.

CRIMSON VENTURE FUND

Created from UA's most successful crowdfunding campaign. If you want to contribute a tax deductible donation to support the growth of the accelerator program, contact Dr. Welbourne at tmwelbourne@ua.edu.

CRIMSON ANGEL NETWORK

Invest in our startups via the Crimson Angel Network. Visit alabama.letsplaymoney.com.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

PART OF THE

University of
Alabama System.