July 2026

EAGLE INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2025-2026 UPDATE



Student Applied Benchmarking Note

In Fall 2024, we re-branded the Student Applied Benchmarking program as the Eagle Innovation Challenge (EIC). The Student Applied Benchmarking process remains the foundation of the program and an essential part of the EIC process.

2026 Eagle Innovation Challenge Showcase

The EIC Showcase was held in conjunction with the Student Leadership Recognition Ceremony and Torch Awards in April 2026.

First Place:
Diego Maldonado-Castillo
Workforce Readiness Exchange Program

Second Place:
Nick Boykin
Accessibility Rooms

Third Place:
Justin Smith
Scaling Financial Literacy at Wake Tech: A Peer-Led Ambassador and Workshop Model

Finalists:
Noor ul aien
Uyen Ka
Navleen Kaur
Sumayah Mohammedhadis
Sophia Morin
Sehyun Park
Aryan Rohira
Nehan Sharif Haroon Rashedu
Cale Rogoyski
Fiorella Ruiz
Diana Seidi



Email eichallenge@waketech.edu for more photos.

UIF Fellows:
Mannal Amjad
Sehyun Park
Fiorella Ruiz

EAGLE INNOVATION CHALLENGE

July 2026 Update, Continued

2025-2026 Highlights:

Continued partnership with University Innovation Fellows Program

Held Fall and Spring EIC Meet Ups

Conducted Program Research (Publication Pending)

Pinned three University Innovation Fellows

Created a Database of Past Projects

University Innovation Fellows

The EIC team discovered Stanford's University Innovation Fellows program in 2023 and pinned our first UIF Fellow, Devin Carhart, in Spring 2025. In Spring 2026, Wake Tech students Elle Ruiz, Mannal Amjad, and Sehyun Park were named Fellows, joining a prestigious cohort of 77 students from nine countries focused on driving innovation and positive change in higher education. After completing six weeks of intensive training, the trio developed an Innovation Marathon designed to help Wake Tech students discover and engage with the many academic, creative, and wellness resources available across campus. Activities include a keynote presentation by innovation expert Alyssa Martina, a student success workshop led by Peer Leaders, a Makerspace session where students create 3D-printed fidget clickers, and a wellness-focused puzzle design workshop. With guidance from Student Support Director Melody Wiggins and Communication Professor Debra Buchanan, the students adapted their ideas into a collaborative initiative that earned UIF recognition. All three students were invited to present their work at the UIF Summit in the Netherlands.





The EIC Team 2025-2026

EIC Director
Emily Moore

Outreach and Publicity Coordinator
Jason Whitehead

Research and Assessment Coordinator
Denise Barton

Showcase Coordinators
Dawn Harvel
Kay Ruth

Mentor Coordinator
Jessica Soto

UIF Coordinator
Melody Henderson

UIF Faculty Champion
Debra Buchanan

Thank you!

Thank you to President Emeritus Dr. Stephen Scott, the Balfour Beatty Foundation, and the Wake Tech Foundation for making Student Applied Benchmarking and the Eagle Innovation Challenge possible.

Special thanks to President Scott Ralls, Executive Vice President Nicole Reaves, Foundation COO Stephanie Lake, Dean Michelle Jackson, Senior Director Laura Bethea, and all who helped make our EIC program and our partnership with UIF possible.

Thank you to our judges:
Dr. John Bakken, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs
Dr. Ryan Schwiebert, Vice President, ITS
Dr. Gabby McCutchen, Provost, Arts and Sciences and Scott Northern Wake Campus

Thank you to our 2025-2026 mentors:
Megan Bell, Tomeka Clarke, Virginia Hupp, Emily Moore, Gillian Norton, Andras Paul, Ryan Pescosolido, Heather Peterson, Paul Politte, Ashley Popio