



Illinois Social Innovation

Mission: ISI is a campus-wide initiative that provides innovative coursework and experiential learning to enable an inclusive network of changemakers to co-create innovative solutions to the world's most pressing social and environmental problems.

Key Aims: In support of the Gies College of Business and the wider UIUC entrepreneurial ecosystem, Illinois Social Innovation aims to:

- 1 **Support and train future leaders of social enterprises.**
- 2 **Enlist the wider student body in social innovation activities.**
- 3 **Engage communities for innovative and actionable insights.**
- 4 **Convene and mobilize knowledge for social innovation.**

ISI pursues these aims through multi-disciplinary engagement, experiential and hands-on education, and co-creative experimentation with community.

Aim 1: Supporting and training future leaders of social enterprise.

The bulk of ISI's offerings have focused on enhancing co-curricular opportunities for social ventures and entrepreneurship under the leadership of Valeri Werpetinski and the Origin Ventures Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership. Co-curricular and experiential programs such as 3 Day Startup, Map the System, and Illinois Impact Incubator aim to train future leaders of social enterprises. Recent efforts have focused on expanding opportunities for specialized and inclusive entrepreneurship to enhance diverse, equitable, and inclusive opportunities for social innovations.



ISI also works to enhance the curricular integration of social entrepreneurship content. We support a pipeline of courses designed to prepare social venture teams for application to the iVenture Accelerator. Efforts are also underway to offer a Gies undergraduate certificate in social entrepreneurship.



BADM 395a/SOW 321: Social
Entrepreneurship

BADM 395b/SOW 375:
Social Enterprise Lab

iVenture Accelerator
(social ventures)

Aim 2. Enlist the wider student body in social innovation activities.

Our targeted social venture pipeline prepares students to launch and scale a social enterprise. However, many students are interested in social innovation and impact beyond ventures. ISI strategically aims to reach a wider number of Gies students by filling curricular gaps in areas such as nonprofit or social impact management, ESG investment (environmental, social, and corporate governance), enhancing DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), or mission-driven careers. In this way, ISI aims to provide a clear entry point for students, staff, and faculty who have innovative ideas for social impact. This aim is primarily advanced through our social innovation leadership series, support for registered student organizations, and an emerging social impact consulting spinoff from the Magelli Office of Experiential Learning.

Aim 3. Engage communities for innovative and actionable insights.

Understanding the user experience helps to ensure that social innovations are useful to the people they are designed to benefit. We provide structure and space for practitioners and local experts to exchange ideas for real world application and insights. Our public engagement efforts focus on the value of integrating business and market perspectives to solve social problems – with a focus on product or service viability. This aim is advanced through our social innovation workshops administered in partnership with the Siebel Center for Design, experiential learning with nonprofits and social purpose organizations coordinated in partnership with UIUC Community Learning Lab and the Magelli Office and engaged partnership with community efforts such as the Community Solutions Incubator.

Aim 4. Convene and mobilize knowledge for social innovation.

Much of the value provided by ISI is realized by binding together discrete efforts through a coordinated infrastructure. We aim for collective impact by strengthening internal partnerships with other colleges and units, as well as building external partnerships with other universities and networks. In partnership with Gies advancement, we are growing an alumni board connect initiative to engage alumni as mentors in areas such as impact investing, social enterprise, and nonprofit management. We are also leading convenings for the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) in pursuit of collective social innovation education and impact at IIN hubs.

