

DRAPER DATA SCIENCE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION 2024-2025



Be Part of the Data Economy and Help Transform the World!

“Data science will drive the greatest transformations of the next few decades. Business plan competitions tend to encourage and attract those people who are going to make those transformations. Melissa and I have found these competitions to be a magnet for progress and change.”

– Timothy Draper, October 2020

The University of Texas at San Antonio reserves the right to postpone, reschedule, or cancel the Draper Data Science Business Plan Competition for any circumstance under their discretion. In the event of cancellation, all materials submitted for the competition will be destroyed and will remain the intellectual property of the submitter.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

November 4, 2024	Online applications open
January 4, 2025	The first phase of applications is close
January 8, 2025	Proof of student status due
January 15, 2025	Announcement of teams that advance to the next phase of competition
January 25, 2025	Sofka mandatory workshop
February 8, 2025	Pitch video and BMC due
February 24, 2025	Selected finalists are notified
February 28, 2025	Intent to complete due by each team
April 7, 2025	Finalist check-in session
April 14, 2025	Finalists submit executive summaries and pitch decks
April 18, 2025	In-person Draper Competition at San Pedro 1 Final pitches are presented, and winners are announced.

The Draper Data Science Business Plan Competition at UTSA is designed for student entrepreneurs globally to advance business ventures that use data science to create value, with the potential to change the world in which we live and work. The competition considers data science broadly as a field of inquiry and application encompassing computing, mathematical, statistical methods, and technologies in synergy with domain expertise. It utilizes big data sets to solve unmet problems.

Draper Data Science Business Plan Competition teams can win cash investments for use in their ventures, with up to \$100,000 in prize money:

- 1st place: \$30,000**
- 2nd place: \$20,000**
- 3rd place: \$10,000**
- Honorable Mention: \$5,000**
- Fan favorite: \$5,000**

**At the judges’ discretion, an extra \$30,000 can be awarded to any team(s) as they see fit.*

***Winners may be subject to tax laws, where applicable.*

ELIGIBILITY

To participate in the competition, all teams must apply for the first phase of the competition between **November 4, 2024, to January 4, 2025**. Any application submitted after this period will NOT be accepted.

Venture Teams interested in competing in the Draper Competition must meet the following criteria:

- Be currently enrolled at an undergraduate level (two- or four-year institution) or be a current graduate student (Master's or Ph.D. program) at an accredited, not-for-profit college, in the US, Canada, or Mexico. Recent graduates, having been awarded their degrees in December 2024, are eligible to participate.
- All ventures must have at least two and no more than six members.
- The competition is for new, for-profit, independent ventures in the seed, start-up, or early growth stages. Ventures with a social impact focus are eligible if there is a revenue-generating component to the venture. Ventures that qualify for **501(c) status are not eligible**.
- Former winning teams are ineligible to enter the competition unless they pitch an entirely new business idea.
- Any team that previously competed but did not earn prize money are eligible to compete.
- The team leader serves as the main contact for the team and must complete the team's application. The application must demonstrate that the team leader played a significant role in conceiving the venture.
- Ventures must be **student-created** and **student-managed**. All participants must verify student status at the time of application. Current students can provide an unofficial copy of their transcript or a current class schedule showing the enrollment term. Recent graduates can provide a copy of their diploma, original transcript, or other document proving their eligibility as of **December 31, 2024**.
- Team members must:
 - demonstrate commitment in moving venture forward.
 - play a primary role in developing the business strategy.
 - have key management roles in the startup venture.
- If a member opts out of the team for any reason after an application has been submitted, the team leader must notify the Draper Steering Committee by **March 31, 2025**. After this deadline, the team composition – as listed on the application form - will be considered final

and each member will receive their equal share of any prize money the team might win.

- Each team must provide contact information for a faculty advisor/mentor at their institution who is familiar with the team and the venture.
- Any faculty advisor/mentor is welcome, but not required to be present at the in-person finals. However, they will be contacted as part of the vetting process of teams.
- Ventures must be wholly owned by the team.
- An existing business is eligible only if, as of 11:59 p.m. on December 31, 2024, it has
 - received less than \$25,000 in funding, **and**
 - earned less than \$100,000 in gross revenue.

Disclaimers

- The competition organizers reserve the right to disqualify any entry/team at any time, that in their judgment, violates the letter or spirit of the competition.
 - UTSA School of Data Science and the Draper Competition Planning Committee assumes no responsibility to ensure the confidentiality of any information disclosed by teams before, during, or after the competition.
 - Applications submitted to the competition are considered public. The documents may be shared with judges, advisors, future students, posted on websites, used for marketing purposes, etc.
 - Participating teams should ensure that their documentation does not contain trade secrets or proprietary information.
 - Participants agree to be photographed and recorded and allow UTSA free use of these images and a summary description of all executive summaries.
 - All decisions regarding the competition rules, procedures, and processes are at the sole discretion of the competition organizers.
 - The selection of the teams to compete on competition day and the selection of the winners are at the sole discretion of the Draper Competition Planning Committee and competition judges.
 - Any team who intentionally initiates contact with any judge prior to competition day will be
- 2024 –2025 Draper Competition Handbook

disqualified from the competition.

APPLYING TO COMPETE

- All team ventures who wish to compete in the Draper Competition must complete the online application forms.
- The application does not have to be completed in one sitting. Partially completed applications are saved and can be submitted by the stated deadlines.
- Applicants can go back and forth between questions; however, all must be answered to submit. If an answer does not apply, please select “N/A.”
- The application consists of two phases. The first phase includes the submission of information about the venture team and its business proposal:

PHASE I

Section I: Team Details

Questions 1 – 7: Student team member information must include full names, email addresses, education level, race, gender identity, university/college, city, and state.

Question 8: Student team’s faculty advisor/mentor information to include their full name, title, email, and phone number

Section II: Business Venture Proposal

Question 9: Provide name of business venture

Question 10: Identify sector/industry of business venture

Question 11: As a single PDF file, upload the business venture proposal that discusses:

- the business venture and product/service/concept (*max 50 words*)
- the application of data science tools/techniques in solving the business challenge (*max 200 words*)

- the competitive advantage created using data science tools/techniques (*max 100 words*)

PHASE II

All student teams who successfully pass phase I of the application process will be notified by **January 15, 2025**, and advance to phase II of the competition.

- All teams that advance will be required to attend a mandatory workshop intended to provide support in the next phase of the competition.
- Teams **MUST** have at least one team member represent their team, although attendance by the entire team is highly encouraged.
- Teams that do not attend this workshop will forfeit the opportunity to submit their 90-second pitch video and business model canvas which are the final parts of the application.

Business Plan and 90 Second Pitch Video

- ◇ As a single PDF file, upload the venture business plan using the [Business Model Canvas](#) (BMC). A customized template is provided on the application form. The BMC is a tool that entrepreneurs use to track their progression from unproven concepts to viable ventures. This document also lays the foundation for the executive summary finalists to submit prior to finals.
- ◇ Provide the YouTube link to a 90-second pitch video marked as “unlisted.” A short guide is provided for tips.
- ◇ Certify all team members are either current students and/or recent graduates as of December 31, 2024. Verification of enrollment for **ALL** team members will be required. Upon submission of the application form, all team members listed under Section I will immediately receive an email with instructions to provide proof of student status. For current students, a copy of the class schedule for the current semester or an unofficial transcript is acceptable. For recent graduates, either a copy of the degree/diploma showing the graduation date, or a copy of the unofficial transcript can serve as verification. A team's entry into the competition **WILL NOT** be considered until proof of status is received for all

student members by the stated deadline of January 8, 2025.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Upon receipt of all application materials, including the confirmations of student status, the Draper steering committee will review team applications to select finalists. The review criteria are defined to match the content of the application form. Teams will be judged on the following criteria:

- Clear identification of problem statement
- Novel technical approach to solving business challenge using Data Science tools and methodologies
- Review of 90-sec video and Business Canva Model (BMC) documents

INVITATION TO COMPETE OR WITHDRAW

- Any pre-selected venture invited to continue to phase II of the competition will be notified by **January 15, 2025**.
- All finalist teams invited to pitch their venture idea in person will be notified by **February 24, 2025**, and will have until **February 28, 2025**, at 5:00 pm CST to confirm their participation.
- Confirmation will take place via email. Instructions will be provided to those selected, and additional information about the finals will be provided then.
- **Any invited team not confirming their participation at the finals by the deadline will be disqualified.**

All finalists must be available IN-PERSON at the UTSA School of Data Science on **April 18, 2025**, to pitch and participate in the final competition round for which they confirmed their attendance.

DELIVERABLES FOR THE COMPETITION FINALS

Five days prior to finals, participating teams must submit:

- An executive summary that provides a written narrative of the venture's Business Model

Canvas (BMC),

- A venture pitch deck that will be used during final presentations.

Templates for both documents will be provided.

The Executive Summary

- May not include any information about a team's school (Omit reference in text, email, headers/footers.)
- Will be limited to two pages of consecutive text
- May include one additional page of images, graphics, and charts only
- Should address all the questions in the template (see below).
- Must be submitted as a PDF document with venture name as the file name (i.e., "VentureName.pdf")

The Venture Pitch Deck

- Company summary – in 1-2 paragraphs describe the problem the venture is addressing, the data science solution, product or offering, and identify the potential customers
- Problem Statement – What is the problem you are addressing and why do customers care?
- Market Size – How large is your total addressable market?
- Customer Analysis – Which customer segments are you targeting? Include who you are targeting first if you are addressing more than one.
- Product or Service Description – Describe the product or service you are selling.
- Product Development Status – What is the state of your product development? What else needs to be done to be able to go to market? What are the key milestones? (e.g., Do you have an MVP already? Do you have pilots? Do you have customers, etc.?)
- For life science companies, outline your FDA approval timeline.
- Intellectual Property – What is the status of your IP (e.g., patents) and status of any IP

licenses (e.g., if you are licensing your IP from a university)?

- Competitive Differentiation – Who are your competitors and why is your product better than the competition?
- Sustainable Competitive Advantage – What is the moat around your business?
- Sales and Marketing Plan – What is your plan to go to market?
- Company Management Start-Up – Show the current founders/managers of the company. Highlight those that are currently degree-seeking students.
- Advisors and Advisory Boards – Show individuals who are advising the company. (If applicable.)
- Financial Projections for 3-5 years (e.g., Revenue, income, and net cash flow)
- Describe amount of investment sought and use of funds.
- Expected exits (IPO, acquisition) and potential acquirers. (If applicable.)

At the finals, a panel of external judges will assess all ventures on their viability, investing ability, and competitiveness. This final round will be judged by at least three judges. Finalists will be evaluated solely based on their performance at the time of presentation.

AWARDS TO WINNERS

After the competition, individual meetings will be scheduled with each winning team to discuss the award of their prizes and any other applicable reimbursement expenses. Competition prizes will be equally divided among all team members and disbursed to them by the School of Data Science. Any student that seeks to be removed from the team must request their team lead submit an e-mail to the Draper Steering Committee by **March 31, 2025**. After this date, all team members included in the application will be considered team members and equally share any potential winnings.

Each final payout to students will reflect any cash prize earned by their team, in addition to their respective travel costs discussed below.

Applicable taxes will be deducted from the original prize amount and are likely to have tax

implications as would any additional earnings. If students are receiving need-based aid, additional income can affect future financial aid award packages.

AVAILABLE REIMBURSEMENT

Travel costs, hotel accommodations, and meals will only be covered for participating teams traveling into San Antonio. **Any team local to the city is NOT eligible for any form of reimbursement.**

Please note that disbursements (awards and reimbursements) can take 45 days (about 1.5 months) after the end of the competition to be processed. **At that time, the School of Data Science will consider its financial obligations to all participants complete.**

Travel

For participating teams, travel reimbursements will be calculated as follows:

- Within San Antonio: Parking will be provided at the competition site. No other travel reimbursement will be offered.
- From Texas, excluding San Antonio: \$250 per student on each team.
- Outside Texas, but coming from the contiguous 48 states of the United States, Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico: \$450 per student on each team.
- Outside the United States, and coming from Canada or Mexico: \$650 per student on each team.

Lodging

- Hotel accommodations for the duration of the competition will be arranged by, and at the cost of, the UTSA School of Data Science.
- If any student declines accommodations provided by the UTSA School of Data Science, the student will be responsible for their own arrangements. These expenses will NOT be reimbursed, and the costs and fees associated with the university-issued lodging will be deducted from any reimbursement owed to the student.
- Any early arrival, prior to the check-in date as noted in the hotel reservation, will be at the

student's own expense and WILL NOT be reimbursed.

- In case of late arrival, past the check-in date noted in the reservation, any nightly hotel fees and rate charged to the UTSA School of Data Science WILL be deducted from the reimbursement owed to the student UNLESS due to an emergency and provided it is immediately communicated to the Draper Steering Committee.

Meals

Each participating team member traveling into San Antonio will be reimbursed in the following manner:

- Thursday, April 17, 2025: Dinner only - at the rate of \$34;
- Friday, April 18, 2025: Lunch only - at the rate of \$16; Breakfast and dinner will be provided at the event.
- Saturday, April 19, 2025: Breakfast only - at the rate of \$14.

As required by the State Comptroller, UTSA adheres to the GSA per diem reimbursement rates as the method for determining maximum meal rates.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Draper Data Science Business Plan Competition is hosted by The University of Texas at San Antonio School of Data Science. Please email draper@utsa.edu with any additional questions.