PIT-UN 2019 Network Challenge Final Report:

PantherX Fellows Program at Florida International University

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By the summer of 2020, the Gordon Institute worked closely with FIU's Office of Micro-Credentials

charged with overseeing the design, quality, and final approvals of all badges offered to FIU students.

Micro-badges usually require 12 hours of instruction, students' assessments, a reflection essay from

each student, and an exit survey. The approval process is time-consuming and departments are not

allowed to promote or recruit before final approvals are in place.

The PIT badge was designed by the Gordon Institute as a 12-hour program with one full day (two

modules, 4 hours of instruction each), and a half-day (one module, 4 hours). The modules' contents and

learning objectives were discussed and designed with faculty members of the Department of Public

Policy and Administration of FIU's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) who specialize on

technology and public policy. Marketing materials were also prepared for recruitment purposes.

The PIT badge was taught on two occasions, in the Fall of 2020 (December) and Spring 2021 (April).

Three modules were designed:

Module 1: "*Introduction to Public Interest Technology"* In this module, students evaluated the influence

of technology on their daily lives, the evolution of information technologies and their use for the

provision of services from the First Industrial Revolution to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the

impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the use of technology to deal with the crisis was also discussed.

Communications infrastructure and emerging technologies were also studied.

Module 2: "*Introduction to Civic Service Design*" where students were presented with how some of the

technologies previously discussed in module one are applied in the public sector through the strategies

of Smart Cities. Students were introduced to the concept of design thinking as a creative approach to

solving problems, equipping governments with innovative approaches to solve complex challenges, and, very importantly, that it is a human and user-centered approach.

Module 3: "*AI: A Transformative Technology*" included a discussion of the rise of machine learning, narrow versus general AI, what machine-learning is and how it has been applied from voice learning to worrisome uses such as deep fakes. One of the most important components of this module included discussions and examples regarding trustworthy and ethical AI to deal with biases and possible discrimination in the application of AI for the provision of services.

For each module the students had to answer a five-question quiz and write a final reflection essay on how the badge had changed them, improved their understanding of key issues, and how relevant the content was to their future careers.

A major adjustment to the PIT original program was the internships for the FIU students that were switched from on-site to virtual. Due to the ongoing pandemic and the rise of the Delta variant in South Florida, municipal government partners requested that the fellowships be virtual. This hampered some of the learning by preventing students from being exposed to the culture of our city governments.

A total of 12 students were placed with three different local governments working on issues of blockchain adoption, crypto policy, resilience, and economic development. The table below shows the breakdown.

The PIT program was a great learning experience. To see the students' excitement and commitment to issues of equality, fairness, public service, and eagerness to contribute to solving difficult problems was worth all the effort and challenges encountered. Local government agencies may need additional support from academic institutions to better understand and adopt public interest technology policies and initiatives.

b. What specific advice would you offer to other members concerning this project?

- Consider making the badge a 16-to-20-hour program as opposed to 12 hours to cover more issues and have more time for tabletop exercises and hands-on activities.

- If a longer program is not possible, make the badge more topic specific. For example, focus only on civic service design or AI.

- Dedicate time to cultivate faculty and stakeholders to ensure their involvement and commitment to the project.

  - Beyond an orientation, provide a comprehensive onboarding program for host partners

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