The Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge  
UT Student Team Competition 2014-15

*Public policy can be defined as a course of actions or inactions created, adopted and implemented by a government or a non-governmental entity in answer to public problems.*  
HBPPC

In the fall of 2013, the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy launched its first student-driven public policy challenge. The goal was to engage students in solving a community problem through research, analysis, collaboration, innovation, problem solving, consensus and compromise. The project – *Equip the Strip!* – researched and developed solutions for parking on the Cumberland Avenue “Strip,” as part of the city of Knoxville’s renovation project, the *Cumberland Avenue Corridor Project.* Students created an online survey (900+ responses) and hosted a Saturday workshop (60 students) to gather information and develop recommendations. The final report can be read [here](#).

**Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge (HBPPC) - 2014-15**

**Overview**

This year, in tribute to the late Sen. Howard Baker, we propose to rename the challenge, the *Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge (HBPPC).* This year’s challenge is modeled after the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Institute Penn Policy Challenge. (We have borrowed heavily from their process and learned much from them.) Student teams develop solutions in the form of public policy legislation and/or initiatives which address the problem they are trying to solve. The Challenge happens in two phases. All student teams will compete in the Fall Semi-Final Competition in November featuring a five minute presentation and a 1-2 page executive summary of their problem and solution. The top five teams will advance to the Final Competition in February 2015 featuring a 10-15 page policy brief and a 10 minute Powerpoint presentation. The grand prize winning team will receive $3,000 and the two runner-up teams $1,000 each, to use toward furthering their policy solution. We will use real problems collected from government and non-profits across the state of Tennessee or suggested by the student teams. Throughout the process, the stakeholders (government, non-profits, etc.) will be engaged as advisors to the teams and their input will be continuously requested in order to develop an appropriate solution and to provide evaluation/assessment of the proposed solution. Each student team will be led by a graduate student and mentored by faculty and/or professionals and stakeholders. Students will apply online individually and be assigned to a Challenge team based on their interests, background and skills. The goal is to create diverse teams (interdisciplinary and across classes) of 3-5 students each.

**Problem Solicitation**
Problems and concerns within the Tennessee region have been solicited from area governmental and non-governmental agencies through email and FaceBook announcements, listserves and community organizations, and the UT Institute for Public Service. For example, the Metropolitan Drug Commission has asked for help concerning the increasing number of women abusing prescription opioids and the 2014 Tennessee law criminalizing women who have babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. TDOT has requested help with “distracted drivers” and with getting trucks off the roads to make roads safer, protect the environment and save money. Obviously these are issues that affect communities across the country and around the world, thus this research will be of benefit outside our state and in communities across the US.

**Competition Details**

The challenge is open to all students, with faculty, professionals, legislators and community leaders, serving as advisors/mentors to the teams or judges in the Semi-Final and Final competitions. With issues provided by an organization or from the student team itself, the teams will create and draft a 1-2 page executive summary of a policy brief and create a 5 minute slideshow presentation that provides a solution to the problem. These will be judged, by a panel of 3-5 outside judges, at the Semi-Final competition in November 2014 to select the top five teams to move onto the Finals in February 2015. The judges will receive guidelines to use in the judging and they will be selected from the areas of law, government, policy, business, and public service. Then over the holiday and early spring semester, these top five teams will further refine and enrich their solutions, using the feedback of the judges and their faculty mentors/advisors and further research to develop full 10-15 page policy briefs and 10 minute slideshow presentations for the Finals in February. The five teams will compete in front of a public audience on a Sunday afternoon with the judges awarding prizes to the top three teams. A celebratory luncheon will be held the next week for all competitors and the winners will be presented with their cash prizes ($3,000 – grand prize and $1,000 to two runner ups) to help them begin to implement their solutions. For example, the teams may decide to fund someone to conduct further research over the summer on their solution or they might hire a firm to create or implement their solution, such as an educational website, training program, or mobile app. Or they might donate it to the agency they were working with to implement the solution. The possibilities are endless.

If invited, UT’s top team will represent UT at the National Invitational Policy Challenge in March 2015 in Philadelphia and the team’s travel expenses would be funded by the HBPPC through gifts and donations.

**Why a Policy Challenge?**

With this hands-on approach of experiential learning and the legacy of Sen. Baker, we believe students and the faculty/community will be motivated to become more civically engaged, understand the importance of bipartisanship and collaboration, and work together to search for new solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems, through the use of public policy. Additionally, research has shown that such experiences will help students build their creative problem-solving skills, improve critical thinking and analysis, build resilience and research skills, improve their writing and
presentation skills, strengthen leadership and teamwork, and more -- all attributes valuable for their future careers and retention to graduation (Appendix 1).

In support of these efforts, a local business has stepped forward to offer a sterling silver bowl, which will be engraved with the winning team member names and displayed at the Baker Center, commemorating each year’s winners of the Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge (HBPPC). Other sponsors will be solicited too. Our dream is to expand this competition in 2015-16 across the state of Tennessee by encouraging other colleges and universities to join us in this competition and by providing them with a model that encourages all students and the community to be engaged citizens.

More details follow below and include a packet of information, pulled largely from the Fels Institute website and other policy writing websites, which will be shared with Challenge participants to further explain the policy challenge.

**Challenge Timeline**

**Wed., Aug. 27 @ 3:30 pm and Tues., Sept. 2 @ 5:15 pm:** Information sessions will be offered. Students will apply individually online via [http://tinyurl.com/PolicyChallenge14-15](http://tinyurl.com/PolicyChallenge14-15) The form will ask them to indicate their policy interests and define their related skills. The idea is to create interdisciplinary teams of students with similar policy interests and for students to meet new people. A Baker Center team of Ambassadors and staff will review applications and populate teams of 3-5 students, including at least one team member that is a graduate student, preferably in the MPPA, Political Science or other graduate policy program. A stipend of $500 for each team leader of a semi-final team and $1,000 for the five semi-finalist teams in the finals will be provided. Teams will be encouraged to work with a faculty and/or professional mentor for advice, direction and feedback. The mentors are resources and members of the team, but the students develop the policy and make the presentation. **Applications close on Sept. 12.**

**Tues., Sept. 16, 5:30 pm:** An opening reception will be held to meet the contestants, review the HBPPC rules and expectations and answer questions. Teams will have a chance to meet one another, meet interested faculty and hear from community members needing assistance with their policy issues. An information packet (Appendix 2) will be handed out including a list of all deliverables with due dates and examples. A brief discussion of the policy writing process will be included, but a workshop on this will be offered on Sept. 30, 5:30 pm. Teams will begin to discuss possible issues to address in the Challenge and schedule their next meeting to begin making plans for drafting their ideas outline.

**Sept. 29-Oct. 3:** During this week all the teams will meet at their convenience with the HBPPC Challenge staff to discuss their ideas. Each team will bring an **outline of ideas** and then begin to draft of their executive summary. Contact [policychallenge@utk.edu](mailto:policychallenge@utk.edu) for appointment.
Tues., Sept. 30, 5:30 pm: WORKSHOP I - Drafting the Executive Summary and Presenting Your Case at the Semi-Final Challenge. Defining your problem, identifying stakeholders, researching solutions, writing the summary, and presentation skills. Instructors: Dori Stiefel and John Haas

Oct. 1-15 – Turn in Meet-the-Team Blogposts – Provide a brief description of the team’s selected problem and mini bios of the team members and mentor(s). A new one will be posted weekly on the HBPPC website and shared with the Daily Beacon. (Sample questions provided.)

Wed., Oct. 15: The draft Executive Summary is due. This draft will be reviewed by the HBPPC staff and feedback provided to the team during team meetings scheduled at their convenience the week of Oct. 20-24.

Oct. 20-24: Schedule a team meeting with HBPPC director to discuss Exec. Summary

Wed., Nov. 5, 5-7 pm: Pizza & Practice! We will open the Toyota from 5-7 pm for teams to practice their presentation in front of the HBPPC staff and get feedback to improve!

Fri., Nov. 14: Final Executive Summary is due to the HBPPC via email and forwarded to the judges.

Wed., Nov. 19, 5:30 pm: Semi-Final Competition will be held to narrow down the teams to the top five. These presentations will be judged by a panel and the five semi-finalists announced. We will provide a form for the judges to use to help guide their decision-making, but their deliberations will determine the winners.

HBPPC Finals – Spring Semester
Over the holidays and early in the spring semester, the five semi-finalist teams will have time to revise and enrich their policy solutions into a full policy brief, including a campaign plan and budget, and a 10-minute slide show presentation. The Finals will be held on Sunday, Feb. 22, and the public will be invited to attend. A panel of judges will determine the top three winners and they will be announced at the conclusion of the Finals. A luncheon honoring all teams will be held the following week and checks presented to the winners.

Tues., Jan. 13: Turn in Meet-the-Team Blogpost – Provide a brief description of the team’s selected problem and solution along with a description of the team members and mentor(s). A new one will be posted weekly on the HBPPC website and shared with the Daily Beacon.

Jan. 14: WORKSHOP II: Writing Your Policy Brief & Presentation Tips for the Finals

Mon., Jan. 26: Teams will turn in a draft of their policy brief via email to the Challenge Staff.

Feb. 2-6: Schedule team meeting with the HBCPP staff to discuss and review policy brief.

Mon., Feb. 16: Final Policy Brief, Campaign Plan and Budget will be sent to Policychallenge@utk.edu
**Week of Feb.16-19:** Teams can schedule time to practice their presentation – scheduled at team’s convenience and Toyota availability.

**Sun., Feb. 22:** Final Competition – Toyota Auditorium 1:30-4 pm – Teams will present their policy brief (including executive summary, budget, and campaign plan) and 10 minute slideshow presentation. The top three winners will be announced with the grand prize winning team receiving $3,000 and two runner-ups receiving $1,000 each. These prizes will go toward the implementation of their policy solution.

**Wed., Feb. 25:** Celebration luncheon for all competitors (semi-finalists and finalists) and presentation of checks. If invited, the #1 team will represent UT at the National Final at the Fels Institute at the University of Pennsylvania on March 22-23, 2015.
RESOURCES

As described in the introduction, we have used the Fels Institute Penn Policy Challenge as a model for this competition. We have spoken with the director and manager at Fels and received great support and information from them. We greatly appreciate their help. Be sure to visit their website for videos from the finals, and examples from their previous winners. There are examples on their website from the Penn Challenge and the National Invitational Challenge, both run by Fels.

https://www.fels.upenn.edu/penn-public-policy-challenge

https://www.fels.upenn.edu/national-competition


Appendix 1

Benefits to the Students & Community
In addition to being a wonderful tribute to the legacy of Sen. Baker, some of the many benefits of this type of challenge include:

- Understanding of and engagement in the public policy process
- Development of new knowledge and exposure to the various tools for effectuating public policy solutions (e.g., law, regulation, dispute resolution, enforcement, community-based services, grass-roots initiatives, various products (apps) and educational methods (websites), etc.)
- Improved skills in research, analysis, problem-solving, consensus, leadership and teamwork
- Opportunity for close interaction with and invaluable mentoring by faculty and grad students as students hone their research skills and understanding of public policy.
- Development of presentation and communication skills
- Collaboration across disciplines and professions, and excellent networking opportunities
- Healthy competition among students and increased awareness of community issues by all
- Introduction to new avenues for future academic and professional exploration
- Experiencing the joy of public service
- Connection of the students to the community and as a result, improved retention and commitment to UT and the community in future years
- An example for students and the community of “Paying it forward” and going beyond volunteering, to impact change through the use of sound public policy, legislation, services and/or products that address a community problem.

Additional Information about the Penn National Invitational
We hope to be invited to the National Invitational Policy Challenge hosted by the Fels Institute every March. The 2014 National Invitational Policy Challenge included policy programs from:

- Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington
- Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania
- Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
- Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
- McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University
- Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California
- Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service, New York University
- School of Public and International Affairs, University of Georgia
- School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
- Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University
One requirement of the National is to have at least one MPPA student as a team member, so we will strongly encourage their engagement and support.

This national challenge is supported by *Governing* magazine, the Knight Foundation, Deloitte and Fels, and will be held at the Fels Institute in March 2015. Winners receive cash prizes of $10,000 and $5000 to help implement their winning proposal. Some examples of past winners include:

- **BetterBAIL**, - **finalist** in the National Challenge. The team seeks the adoption of an online bail payment system which could save the Philadelphia Prison System and pre-trial defendants valuable time and money.

- **LA Saves**, representing the University of Southern California’s Price School of Public Policy, was also selected as a **2014 National finalist**. Amid California’s severe drought, the team hopes to implement a web-based technology platform to engage customers in water conservation efforts. https://priceschool.usc.edu/price-students-win-5000-to-launch-water-conservation-project/

- **2013 National Public Policy Challenge Winning Team: re:Mind** (Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania), Created an appointment reminder service targeting individuals discharged from inpatient mental health hospitalizations in order to decrease preventable re-hospitalizations and other undesirable outcomes that occur when patients miss their follow-up appointments. re:Mind won both the **Penn Finals and the National Finals**, earning $25,000 to kick-start their proposal.

- **2012 National Public Policy Challenge Winning Team: Kinvolved** (Robert F. Wagner, New York University). The Kinvolved mobile app will empower caregivers of students in the New York City Department of Education with timely student attendance information to ensure that all children are present in school all day, every day.
Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who can participate in the Howard Baker Public Policy Challenge?**
   Any undergraduate or graduate student at the University of Tennessee can participate in the Public Policy Challenge. We hope to populate teams with a mixture of graduate and undergrads, majors, skills, and interests. A goal of the Challenge is to bring together students from many different disciplines to work together on real challenges facing Tennessee and the greater Knoxville Area.

2. **Do I need a team or do I apply as an individual?**
   No. You apply for the Challenge as an individual applicant. You will be paired with other students from other majors who list similar policy interest areas with varying skills and talents that will benefit the team. The Challenge wants to encourage you to meet new people and work with students from different disciplines.

   That said, there is space on the application to list a potential partner. Every person needs to apply individually. Being listed as a potential partner on someone else's application does not mean that you have applied. We cannot promise to place you together, but we will certainly do our best.

3. **What does the application require?**
   The application is online here [http://tinyurl.com/PolicyChallenge14-15](http://tinyurl.com/PolicyChallenge14-15)

   The Challenge is about answering real challenges in the community or state through new, creative, integrated solutions. We will offer a list of problems we have received, but you can also suggest your own. You don't have to know the answer to the problem now - that's the goal of the Challenge! We want to learn about what type of problems you would be interested in addressing. What are you passionate about? Your answer could be something that you discovered through your coursework or past work experiences.

   What academic, extra-curricular, and work experiences do you have that are relevant to the competition? The Challenge is a team project. Share a past positive experience you had serving on a team (from class, work, extra-curricular projects, volunteering, community involvement, etc.). What made your team successful? What role did you play in your team's success?

   The application also asks you to select your top three policy preference areas from a pre-set list of options. There is also an opportunity to suggest a problem and request a fellow team member.

4. **I don't know anything about public policy or what policy solution I want to propose – should I still apply?**
   **You should apply!** The goal of the Challenge is to bring together engaged, thoughtful students from across UT, to address real challenges facing our state and area. Starting with the application, we encourage you to think first of the problem and then to get creative about the solution. You do not need to have a brilliant public policy solution just yet. You do need to have
a desire to learn about the policy process, to listen and share with others, a desire to work with students in different disciplines, and an enthusiasm for serving Tennessee! Check out the past Winning Ideas at Penn here and watch the YouTube videos to see examples from the FINALS! https://www.fels.upenn.edu/challenge/pastchallenges

5. I don’t know how to write a policy paper, should I still apply?
Not to worry, we will have two workshops to address this, along with help developing your Powerpoint presentation, plus many other resources too. The Policy Challenge is an opportunity to learn why helping your community. It is an excellent way to add to your resume and build your skills in critical thinking, research, analysis, interviewing, communication, listening, negotiation, collaboration and so much more!

6. How big is the time commitment for the Challenge?
The first half of the challenge - the Semi-Finals - will run from Sept. - November - steering clear of interrupting Fall Break or finals. If your team is one of the top five teams, you will move on to the Finals in Jan. - February. The time commitment will vary, but a high estimate is probably 10 hours/week, particularly as the semi-final and final competitions get nearer. If you are the top team and get invited to the National Finals, you will make a trip to Philadelphia around March 22, 2015.

7. Regardless of your team advancing to the finals, all teams are invited to each round of the competition and to participate in the celebration luncheon in February.

8. When is the Application due?
The deadline is Sept. 12, 2014

9. Can I receive course credit for competing in the Challenge?
The Challenge is an extra-curricular activity, not a course. However, if you are interested in seeking “Independent Study” credit from your department for your participation, we would be happy to work with you on your application.

10. What are the prizes?
Aside from the fact that you will have fun and learn a great deal --- If your team wins the grand prize or runner-up prize in the HBPPC Finals, you will receive a $3,000 cash Grand prize or $1,000 runner-up cash prize. The prizes are awarded to your team to help kick start your solution. In addition to winning the Finals, your team MAY earn a spot representing the University of Tennessee in the National Invitational. Additional cash prizes will be given out to winning Nationals teams.

11. What is the National Invitational?
Last year, the Fels Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, hosted the second annual National Invitational Public Policy Challenge. Nine distinguished public policy and public administration graduate programs from around the country traveled to Philadelphia to compete. See the full list of schools here: https://www.fels.upenn.edu/national-competition

12. My question was not answered here. Who should I contact?
Contact the HBPPC Staff at policychallenge@utk.edu