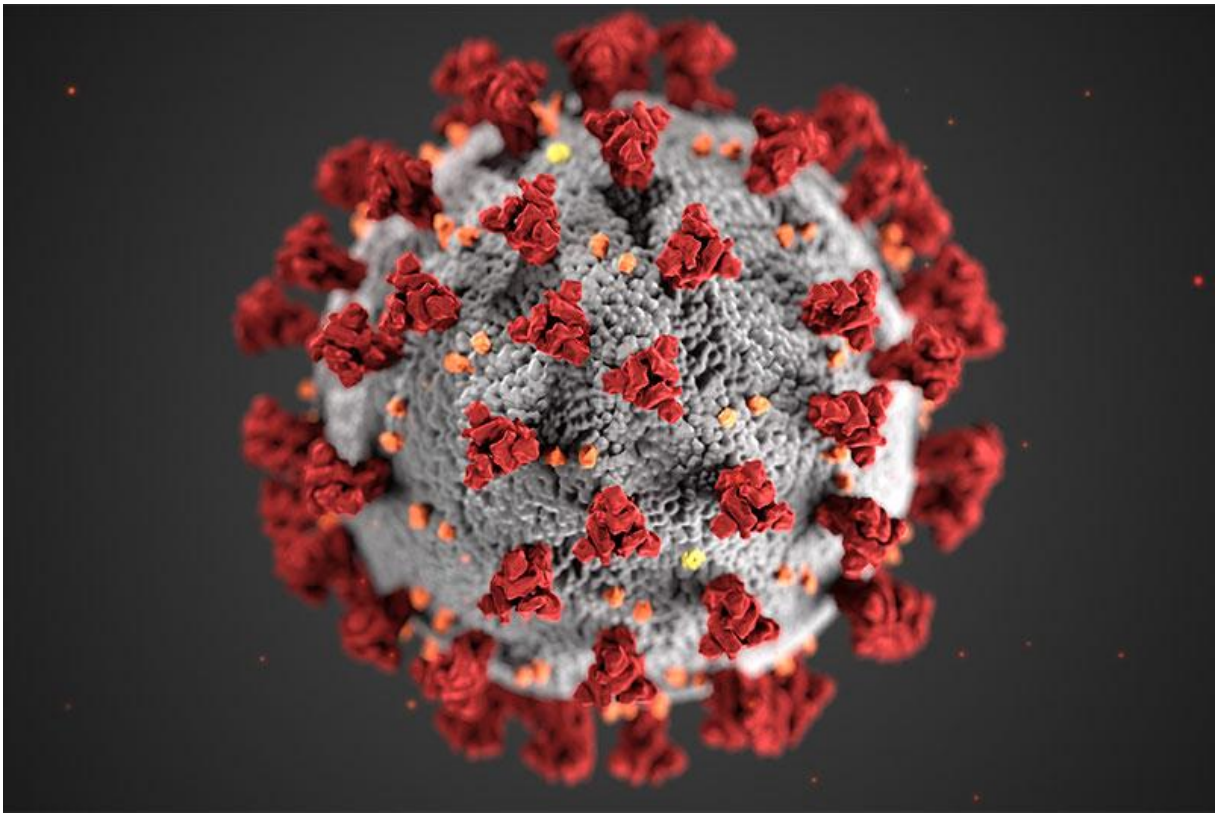
Lepage Center launches new programs to assist businesses affected by COVID-19

April 9, 2020



In response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business is rolling out a series of new initiatives to help entrepreneurs and small business owners impacted by the crisis.

These initiatives include a webpage detailing resources available to businesses, a mentoring and support program for small business owners, and a series of offerings for student entrepreneurs.

On April 9, the Lepage Center launched COVID-19 Resources for Entrepreneurs and Business Owners, a webpage that collects key resources available to support entrepreneurs and business owners affected by the pandemic. The Lepage Center will update the page as additional resources become available.

Leveraging its relationships with GNO Inc., the New Orleans Business Alliance (NOLABA) and the City of New Orleans, the Lepage Center is also launching a new effort to connect business owners with mentors who can help them navigate access to public and private resources and advise them during this challenging time. GNO Inc., NOLABA and the City of New Orleans have each committed to refer small businesses to the Lepage Center to be matched with mentors and advisers based on the business's unique needs, from navigating the federal government's new COVID-19 relief programs to managing their tax returns and business planning to financial forecasting in these times of great uncertainty.

The mentors will include current Lepage Center Innovators-in-Residence as well as dozens of newly recruited advisers, investors and business experts from across the country who have been identified through Tulane's offices of Advancement and Alumni Relations. Businesses interested in participating in the program can submit their requests at https://tulane.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ezjvM4bdWPRRLoh.

"The resilience and grit of our local small businesses during these dark days is truly awe inspiring," said Rob Lalka, executive director of the Lepage Center. "By connecting our city's entrepreneurs to new resources, investors and mentors, we will be able to help more companies navigate the unknowns they will face over the coming months."

In addition to initiatives to support the New Orleans business community, the Lepage Center will continue to deliver its core programs for students but in virtual formats. These offerings include Mentor Office Hours, which enable students to meet one-on-one with entrepreneurial mentors; Spark Hours, which enable students to get help with their ventures from peers and advisers; Virtual Roundtable Discussions, which bring students together to discuss various topics in a virtual group session; and Pizza Pitch Competitions, which enable students to pitch their business ideas to peers and alumni for a chance at $2,000 in prize money.

"Through these unprecedented times we have maintained our commitment to delivering a high level educational experience inside and outside of the classroom, while also serving the local business community in truly meaningful ways," said Ira Solomon, Freeman School dean. "These are just the sort of initiatives that Albert Lepage had in mind when he endowed the center. By adapting our programming to a virtual format, we will be able to continue to serve our students and our city while also engaging a wider range of mentors from across the country."

For more information about these and other Lepage Center programs, contact Emily Egan, director of strategic initiatives, at eegan@tulane.edu or 504-865-5462.