The Social Innovation Group consists of an interdisciplinary group of individuals specializing in the research and development of ubiquitous and social computing technologies. Our vision is simple: To design, build and enhance innovative technologies to solve real-world problems.

We have several ongoing projects in the area of economic mobility. These projects aim to reduce barriers faced by unemployed job seekers from underserved areas (e.g., the lack of reliable transportation, mentorship, and acquiring relevant skills inexpensively). Broadly, we are trying to increase individuals’ access to social networks. One of our ongoing projects is described below:

**Designing for Disadvantaged Job Seekers:**
The Internet plays a pervasive role for job search and employment, particularly for professionals and for those who are highly qualified. While job seekers from all occupational groups and employment status rely on aspects of the Internet for employment, past research suggests that some job seekers are being ‘left behind’ and will continue to do so as the Internet takes on a more eminent role in the employment process. To mitigate this outcome, we extended prior literature and took a user-centered design approach to design and implement a web-based employment application that provides job seekers with resume feedback from local volunteers. We piloted our application to understand: 1) the context and circumstances of our application’s shortcomings and 2) UX principles that address these shortcomings. We are now conducting a longer-term application deployment and will need support analyzing the resulting data (quantitative and qualitative) this summer.

Other projects explore whether and how existing platforms such as social media and applications of the sharing economy (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit), Massive Open Online Courses, and sites like Quora could support employment and/or mitigate employment barriers. We are seeking students to continue the exploration, design, implementation, and/or evaluation of this work.

**Example social media project:**
One topic we are particularly interested in is understanding how social media platforms, like Instagram, are supporting individual entrepreneurs/small business owners in building out their networks and accessing resources. As more people turn to freelancing and gig work to earn a side income, entrepreneurship is set to play a larger role in the growth of our economy. Some research questions include, What are the technical and non-technical requirements to use social media effectively in resource-constrained contexts? How do entrepreneurs build the communication and marketing skills needed to succeed online? Involvement in this project might include analyzing interview data, analyzing survey data, and/or interviewing entrepreneurs about their social media practices. We are looking for someone interested in using qualitative research methods.

For those students interested in software development, our application stack for the resume review application is as follows: Backend App: Python Flask; Database:
MongoDB; Frontend App: Jinja Templates, Javascript, SASS. We use GitHub as our source code repository.