Application to NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp

Name: Alexis Haughey

Phone Number: 631 – 316- 7776

Email Address: Haugheya@mit.edu

School: MIT Sloan School of Management – Technology, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Strategy Group

PhD Entry Year: 2022

Expected Year of Completion: 2028

Areas of Interest: Geography of Entrepreneurship, Innovation Driven Entrepreneurship

Faculty Recommender: Scott Stern

Alexis Haughey

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Education

MIT Sloan School of Management *2022 – Present*
PhD Candidate - Technology, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Strategy Group

- ***Proposed Dissertation Title***: A Revealed Preference Framework for Evaluating the Impact of Regional Innovation Engine Strategies

Massachusetts Institute of Technology *2016 – 2019*
BS Mechanical Engineering w/ Concentration in Water and Energy Systems

Working Papers

Haughey, Alexis. *"Numbers and Narratives: Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Assessments of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for Place-Based Innovation Policy."* Manuscript in preparation, February 2025.

Kolev, Julian, Alexis Haughey, Fiona Murray, and Scott Stern. 2022. *"Of Academics and Creative Destruction: Startup Advantage in the Process of Innovation."* NBER Working Paper No. 30362. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w30362.

Other Research Grants/Projects

Choosing a Regional Innovation Engine: The Impact of Ecosystem Mapping and Stakeholder Engagement on Regional Innovation Engine Choice (Funded by NSF EAGER Grant - PI Scott Stern)

This project examines how regional innovation ecosystems assess their capabilities, engage stakeholders, and select strategic interventions under the NSF Regional Innovation Engines (RIE) program. Leveraging a training program designed for RIE Engines Development Awardees, this study is the largest systematic investigation of regions selecting and executing regional Engine strategies. By collecting structured data on ecosystem assessments, stakeholder involvement, and Engine strategy selections, providing empirical insights into the alignment between ecosystem conditions and strategic decisions. By analyzing how these factors shape Engine selection and design, this project aims to contribute to innovation policy by identifying key conditions for successful regional innovation interventions.

Rural Entrepreneurship: The Impact of Population and Business Density On Startup Formation and Quality (Funded by NSF Grant - PIs Scott Stern and Jorge Guzman)

This research examines the complex relationship between population density and entrepreneurship, exploring how density influences startup formation differently in rural and urban areas. While higher population density can create knowledge spillovers and market opportunities, it may also intensify competition and favor established firms. By identifying the conditions that foster entrepreneurship across varying densities, this study aims to provide insights into regional economic development and inform policies that support new business growth.

Water Safety, Technology Adoption, and Public Trust: A Study on Water Technology Adopton in Brazil(Funded by Fulbright Fellowship - Abbreviated Due to COVID-19)

As a Fulbright Fellow at Universidade Tiradentes (UNIT) in Aracaju, Brazil, I conducted research on water safety and community engagement, focusing on how low-income communities utilize available drinking water technologies and the impact of educational interventions on their uptake of these technologies. My work combined field studies, laboratory research, and stakeholder engagement with parents, teachers, and policymakers to develop an educational curriculum on water safety and a low-cost testing tool for detecting contaminants in drinking water. This research generated insights into how public trust shaped the acceptance of new technological innovations,

which can shape the effectiveness of policy interventions in underserved regions.

Notable Professional Experience

General Partner *Castel Gandolofo, Italy*
Fidelis Ventures *March 2024 – Present*

- Fund Strategy & Capital Raising – Contributed to the development of the fund's investment thesis, fundraising strategy, and LP relations, supporting efforts towards the first close of a $135M fund by June 2025.

Co-Founder *Castel Gandolfo, Italy*
Catholic Institute of Technology *January 2022 – Present*

- Institutional Vision & Academic Strategy – Led the conceptualization and establishment of a faith-driven research university, integrating Catholic intellectual tradition with cutting-edge STEM and interdisciplinary education.
- Fundraising & Strategic Partnerships – Spearheaded fundraising efforts, securing philanthropic contributions, endowments, and institutional partnerships to support infrastructure, faculty recruitment, and research initiatives.
- Governance & Operational Leadership – Developed the university's governance framework, accreditation strategy, and operational roadmap while fostering an academic culture that promotes innovation, ethical leadership, and global impact.

Licensing Associate *Cambridge, MA*
Massachusetts Institute of Technology *July 2020 – July 2022*

- Technology Commercialization & IP Management – Assess the patentability and market potential of MIT-developed innovations, working closely with faculty and researchers to protect intellectual property and facilitate commercialization.
- Industry Engagement & Licensing Negotiation – Develop and execute licensing agreements with startups, corporations, and venture partners, ensuring equitable terms that maximize the impact and financial return of MIT's research.
- Startup Support & Venture Development – Collaborate with entrepreneurs, investors, and incubators to support the formation of MIT spinouts, providing guidance on technology transfer, funding opportunities, and business strategy.

Teaching Assistantships

New Enterprises *Spring 2024/Fall 2023*
Venture Engineering *Spring 2019*
MIT Global Startup Labs *Summer 2018*

As I begin to intensely focus on my dissertation, this bootcamp is an ideal opportunity to deepen my understanding of cutting-edge methods and perspectives in entrepreneurship scholarship. The intensive syllabus of readings, lectures, and discussions will provide me with advanced analytical tools, exposure to key debates, and insights from leading researchers, equipping me to refine my work and position myself as an entrepreneurship scholar. This experience will enhance my ability to communicate my ideas effectively and strengthen my research by exposing me to the most current methods and questions, which will become central to my research agenda in the coming years.

My primary research interest is in the geography of entrepreneurial and innovative activity. Within this, I focus on how entrepreneurial ecosystems shape the formation and success of new startups, as well as how these startups, in turn, contribute to the growth and development of the ecosystem itself.

I have worked on several projects related to this topic, beginning with my role as a research assistant for Professor Scott Stern, during which I supported training sessions for the US regions who were awarded NSF Engines Development grants. These trainings helped them to assess and develop their entrepreneurial ecosystems using the MIT REAP framework. During these training sessions, I collected survey data from participants regarding their ecosystem assessments, stakeholder engagement and Engine strategy selection. This data, which became the basis of a working paper, revealed that stakeholders relied more on qualitative judgments than quantitative metrics in performing ecosystem assessments and that there was significant misalignment between the qualitative perceptions of their ecosystem and quantitative data on the same metrics. This misalignment could lead to significant divergence between programs like the NSF Engines, which prioritize stakeholder engagement and self-determination from more conventional innovation and entrepreneurship policy approaches, which tend to be heavily determined by quantitative output metrics.

More recently, I have begun working with Professors Scott Stern and Jorge Guzman on an NSF-funded project examining rural entrepreneurship. This research explores the relationship between population and business density and startup formation in rural and urban areas. While population growth can create demand and opportunities for new businesses, excessive density may heighten competition and favor established firms. Our study seeks to identify an optimal balance where density promotes entrepreneurship through knowledge spillovers and supply networks without hindering new entrants. If we find that entrepreneurial dynamics vary significantly across different levels of density, it could offer valuable insights into the distinct challenges and opportunities that shape entrepreneurship in rural versus urban areas.

Finally, for my job market paper, I propose a revealed preference approach to compare different approaches to promoting entrepreneurship and innovation. When the federal government chooses to fund innovation and entrepreneurship programs, its objective is not simply to maximize the production of outputs such as startups, inventions and jobs created but to satisfy a more complex objective function that considers factors such as quality, industry focus, geographic distribution, and the demographics of those involved. My proposed approach leverages funding information from Grants.gov to estimate this objective function, allowing me to predict how the government would value other programs which deliver particular outcomes. This framework provides a more nuanced understanding of how the government prioritizes and values different innovation and entrepreneurial outcomes and could be extremely useful for assessing programs like NSF Engines, which prioritize overall ecosystem development rather than any particular outcome metric.

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

Scott Stern
David Sarnoff Professor of Management
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February 2025

RE: NBER Entrepreneurship Boot Camp Recommendation for Alexis Haughey

Dear Committee,

I am delighted to recommend Alexis Haughey for the NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp. Alexis is a third-year doctoral student in the MIT Sloan TIES program, where she has been developing a research agenda centered on the geography of entrepreneurial and innovative activity. Building on a strong foundation in economics and applied empirical toolkit, Alexis is focusing on how entrepreneurial ecosystems shape new startup formation and success, and how those ventures, in turn, influence the evolution of these ecosystems.

Originally trained as a mechanical engineer (she has several patents as an undergrad), and then working in the MIT TLO, Alexis came to graduate school focused on the economics of innovation-driven entrepreneurship, and in particular the role of universities and technology transfer. Now a third year student, she is immersed within the domain of innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem research. Over the past two years, she has served as a research assistant on an NSF EAGER grant examining the conditions shaping NSF Regional Innovation Engine strategy. Specifically, alongside a training program my MIT REAP colleagues and I conducted on behalf of NSF, Haughey conducted an opt-in research study aiming to identify how regional stakeholders assess both the latent strengths and challenges of their region, and how they then translate that assessment into a proposed regional strategy (i.e., their Engine grant proposals). As part of this ongoing work, she produced a very interesting second-year paper identifying that, even with significant training and incentive, there were large disparities between stakeholders' qualitative perceptions of their region and more conventional, quantitative entrepreneurship metrics. This intriguing finding is but the first of several studies likely to come from her study of the NSF Engines program.

Over the past six months, Haughey has been working with Jorge Guzman and myself on a paper exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship and density. Specifically, using data from the Startup Cartography Project, she is examining how both the quantity and quality of entrepreneurship varies with density (analogously to the nice work on density and innovation by Enrico Burkes and Ruben Gaetan), and how both of these metrics vary over time. Her findings—on how knowledge spillovers and competition impact the entry and success of new firms—promise to broaden our understanding of how place-based factors shape entrepreneurship.

Looking ahead, her proposed job market paper will develop a revealed preference framework for understanding how the federal government weighs various objectives

(including geography and demographics) when funding innovation and entrepreneurship programs.

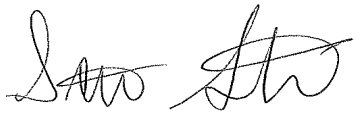
Given her focused inquiry into the causes and consequences of entrepreneurship, particularly with a focus on geography and institutions, **Alexis is exceptionally well-suited to both benefit from and be a great contributor to the NBER Entrepreneurship Boot Camp.**

Her current projects would gain from the broader discussions, empirical approaches, and insights into emerging questions in entrepreneurial economics that the Boot Camp facilitates. I am confident that this experience will enrich her dissertation, strengthen her methodological toolkit, and position her to make impactful contributions to the field.

It is my pleasure to offer my highest recommendation for Alexis's participation in the NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information or clarification.

I hope this letter is useful to you in your decisionmaking, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,



Scott Stern
David Sarnoff Professor of Management
Technological Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Strategic Management Group
MIT Sloan School of Management