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UA Ruhr Pitch Contest 2026

Full Call for Applications

Overview

UA RuhrNorth America Pitch Contest 2026 identifies innovative entrepreneurial ideas from the UA Ruhr ecosystem and supports emerging founders interested in internationalization and the US market.

The contest is open to students and researchers enrolled at Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, and the University of Duisburg-Essen.

The winning team will receive one seat in the STEP USA University Program 2026 in New York City.

About STEP USA

The STEP USA University Program is a three-day startup immersion program organized by German Center for Research and Innovation (DWIH) New York and the German-American Chambers of Commerce (GACC NY). The program is designed for German university startups at various stages, e.g. ideation onwards.

The program provides participants with practical insights into:

- US market entry strategies
- Pitching and storytelling in the US
- Cultural differences and business practices
- Venture capital and investor engagement
- Legal considerations including company setup, visa regulations, employment law, and product liability
- Networking with incubators, mentors, angel investors, and startup ecosystem representatives in New York City

STEP USA 2026 will take place from November 16–18, 2026, in New York City.



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Eligibility

The contest is open to:

- Enrolled students
- Doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers
- Early-stage startups associated with WorldFactory at Ruhr University Bochum, Center for Entrepreneurship and Transfer at TU Dortmund University, GUIDE at university of Duisburg-Essen

At least one founding member or applicant must currently be affiliated with Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, or the University of Duisburg-Essen.

Applications from all disciplines are welcome. Projects with transatlantic relevance, including sustainability, digital transformation, healthcare, mobility, education technology, and related fields, are particularly encouraged.

Contest Format

Applicants must submit a recorded video pitch of no more than five minutes.

The pitch could address the following:

- The problem or opportunity being addressed
- The proposed solution, innovation, or business idea
- Team background and motivation
- Expected benefits of participating in STEP USA

Video submissions should be shared as an unlisted or listed YouTube or Vimeo link. Pitch summary (max. 1 page) as a PDF. Please send your application (video + 1-page summary) to intern@uaruhr.de.

Timeline

Phase	Date
Applications open	June 8, 2026
Submission deadline	July 8, 2026
STEP USA 2026	November 16–18, 2026



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Prize

The winning team will receive one seat for one team member in the STEP USA University Program 2026, sponsored by DWIH New York and organized by UA Ruhr North America. The team member will be responsible for their travel and accommodation and other costs. Any additional team members wishing to participate would also be responsible for covering their own travel, accommodation, visa arrangements, and related expenses. A second seat is dependent on availability of spots.

Organizers and Partners

The UA Ruhr Pitch Contest 2026 is organized by UA Ruhr North America. STEP USA is organized by DWIH New York and the German-American Chambers of Commerce (GACC NY).

For questions regarding the contest and for submission of applications, please contact UA Ruhr North America at intern@uaruhr.de.