

Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Tuvana Rua

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Business Plan Competition Showcases Innovative Student Thinking



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The volume was turned up to 11, literally, as 11 student teams vied over projects at Sacred Heart University's recent Fall 2017 Business Plan Competition.

The teams from the Welch College of Business set up in and around the Martire Business & Communications Center Forum and presented their proposals to a panel of five judges, all local business professionals. The first-place team, "Campus Cutz," with Molly Dillon, Ryan Gawricki, Jared Grillo, Phil Sampson and Chris Smith, under the guidance of Professor David Murray, proposed a mobile barber/hair salon primarily serving college campuses. Second place went to "ShuTriton," with Professor Joshua Moritz' students—Joshua Allan, Joseph Drenzo, Mark Johnstone, Jordan Kaplan, Mel Melconian and Matthew Tugnutt—proposing nutritious drinks and snacks at SHU's Pitt Center.

Third place was awarded to "Pitch Your Image," with Lucas Almeida Name de Morais, Frank Catania, Jenna Dorosh, Mackenzie Fischer, Julia Kukulka and Marco Lagana, under the tutelage of Professor Tuvana Rua. Their business idea was a referral service for plastic surgeons and patients that would offer wider choices and more comparative quotes and provider qualifications than some health plans might allow. Team member Catania had some personal knowledge to boost the team's effort: his mother is Dolores of the Bravo TV channel's *Real Housewives of New Jersey*, who has been a plastic surgery client. She gave them a lot of feedback, as well as access to providers. Other posters included:

Standing outside the Forum after her team's presentation, MacKenzie Fischer noted, "We were a bit anxious going in, but we had prepared so much and felt really ready. The weight just floated away after we introduced ourselves. We were confident and knew what we were saying."

Fischer added that the project had the benefit of forging a close friendship among her teammates, while readying them for post-college work life. "The experience really prepared us for real-world presenting to professionals," she said.

Another team, "The Green Machine," didn't make the cut but had the interesting idea of equipment that would attach to a home's water main and convert water flow to electric energy through a turbine and batteries. Team member Petra Krompaska, who came up with the idea, said, "My Dad and I have been interested in alternative energy sources after seeing windmills all over Europe."

Teacher's Assistant Kevin Carman was on hand for the competition, with the unique perspective of being a member of No Nose, the team that won SHU's Spring 2017 Business Plan Competition. He shared, "You become like a parent, seeing your mentees in the situation you were in. I'm motivational—confidence is the key thing...making them believe they can win."

Faculty judges score dozens of poster presentations

The competition also included a display of 43 posters by other teams of students (primarily freshmen) who were not tapped to compete, but had thoughtful and innovative business ideas. The posters were shown in the hallways immediately adjacent to the Forum.

Faculty judges scored the poster displays, based on such criteria as the idea itself, competitive analysis, marketing strategies, finances and visual esthetics.

The Best Service poster was "Local Coach", with Marcel Godbout, Paul Riccio, Rebecca Nguyen, Michael Peters, Nicholas Agrinzone and Brendan Walsh, guided by Dean John Chalykoff of the Welch College of Business. They proposed a business that works to connect athletes with reputable coaches.

The Best Product poster was "Lite 'n Load," with Thomas Bohner, Stephen Vaughan, Allison Strid, Fatlom Kelmendi, Thomas Black and Hunter Marson, also with Dean John Chalykoff. Their idea proposed a handheld device that would scan textbooks and store text to a USB-based unit for uploading to a computer.

The Best Idea among posters was "Remote Finder," from Dino Bradaric, David Esposito, Joseph Greco, Michael Lynch and Khalil Walker-Eldridge, with Professor Leo Giglio. Their idea proposes remote finding software that is already installed in a new television or cable box.

Finally, the Best Poster was "Read-it," from Leann Bauer, Patrick Culhane, Michael Korn, Alessandra Maniscalco, Caitlyn Montgomery and Matthew Sorrento, with SHU President Dr. John J. Petillo. Their idea offers an application that enables books or documents to be scanned and converted to audio for individuals with different learning needs.

Other posters included:

- “Dec Our Party,” created by Alexis Carucci and Lea Mascola, proposing an interior design company that custom-decorates homes for any party occasion
- “The Cookie Dipper,” a business plan presented by students Quentin O’Reilly, Matt D’Onofrio, Ronaldo Navarro and Maya Isom, suggesting a clever device for holding and dipping cookies
- “Resurrect,” a phone case with a split adaptor, proposed by Julia DeEsso and Nicholas Bivona
- “Double Buckle,” by Alexandra Dorey and Akilah Bell, which offered a car seat for kids with a buckle that is more difficult for children to undo while still being user-friendly for parents
- “Dorm Decor & More,” a business plan for a website and application that would allow students to pre-plan their dorm room space, from Emily Pellegrino, Lexie Palmer, Jessica O’Brien, Michelle Agovino and Bridget Joyce

Rua, assistant professor of management and organizer of the competition, said the challenge generated many great ideas, excitement and enthusiasm. “It is a great way to start a business program, giving students an overall view of business,” she said.