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Faculté de génie
Faculty of Engineering

Prizes in Entrepreneurship and Innovation 2009

Twelve student teams eager to demonstrate their business acumen squared off before a panel of judges at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Engineering on March 27, and six walked away with a share of \$45,000 in prize money.

The Prizes in Entrepreneurship and Innovation competition is funded by the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Endowment Fund, created two years ago by an anonymous donation of \$1 million to the Faculty of Engineering. Its purpose is to foster and nurture a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation within the faculty community.

In the course of developing a business plan and presentation under the guidance of seasoned mentors, engineering students that participate in the competition learn what takes to develop a great idea from concept through to commercial success.

Despite the fact that the judges could only award prizes to half of the final-

ists, Claude Laguë, Dean and Professor of the Faculty of Engineering, applauded the calibre of the business plans and presentations from all of the students.

"It's only the second year and already we've seen a big improvement in quality and professionalism," he said. "We're trying to get students to look beyond science and technology and realize you have to be able to sell an idea. Our goal is to see some of these ideas taken to the next level and become viable businesses."

While many of the products or technologies presented were still theoretical, students were nonetheless on the hook to deliver a rock solid business plan. The judges seldom passed up an opportunity to demonstrate just how difficult it is to survive and thrive in the business world, hitting students with tough questions about intellectual property protection, financing, exit strategies for investors, defining a market and capturing market share from established competitors.

Students of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Engineering learn what it takes to turn a great idea into a viable business plan

Five of the presenting teams were drawn from the undergraduate level and seven from the graduate level. In the end, the judges awarded prizes to the three teams in each level that best demonstrated the strongest grasp of key business fundamentals. The first-place teams each received \$10,000, the second-place teams each received \$7,500, while the third-place teams each took home \$5,000.

For Dan Dicaire, first place winner from the graduate level, the value of participating in the competition went far beyond a simple cash prize. Even more valuable was the guidance and insight he received from his mentor in the process of developing his idea.

"If you saw my first business plan for this, it didn't even include financing," he said. "It's a good exercise for engineers to understand what it takes to turn an idea into a marketable product that can change the world."

"I put a lot of work into the research, the business plan and the presentation and it's great to see it pay off," Dicaire added. "It's a real boost to see that there could actually be a viable business out of what I am researching."

The judging panel included, from the University of Ottawa; Frank Mellor (Executive in Residence, Faculty of Engineering), James Bowen (Adjunct Professor, Telfer School of Management), Claude Laguë (Dean, Faculty of Engineering), Hanan Anis (Professor, Faculty of Engineering), and Claude D'Amours (Vice-Dean Academic, Faculty of Engineering). Andrew Fisher (Executive Vice-President, Wesley Clover), Laurie Davis (Angel Investor), and Anel Hussein (Director, Marketing and Business Development, Workshift Systems) rounded out the panel.



Left to right:
Frank Mellor
Claude Laguë
Laurie Davis
Anel Hussein
James Bowen
Claude D'Amours
Not in the photo:
Hanan Anis
Andrew Fisher

Undergraduate WINNERS



First Place: SuiteDelphin
Team members: (left to right) Simon Roy (Bachelor of Applied Science Software Engineering), François de Bellefeuille (Bachelor of Applied Science Software Engineering), Anthony Laines (Bachelor of Applied Science Software Engineering)
Business plan: SuiteDelphin has developed a unique customized software suite that reduces the administrative headaches and paper burden associated with scheduling teachers' supervision time. New collective bargaining agreements have limited the amount of time teachers can spend in supervision, creating a significant challenge for school boards with limited resources. The software is already in beta testing with six Ontario schools.



Second Place: Solid State Sound
Team members: (left to right) Pierre Coulombe Catellier (Bachelor of Applied Science Electrical Engineering, Co-op), Jean-Pierre Simard (Bachelor of Applied Science Electrical Engineering, Co-op), Zac Brunet (Bachelor of Applied Science Electrical Engineering, Co-op), Paul Lalonde (Bachelor of Applied Science Electrical Engineering),
Business plan: Solid State Sound is tackling the challenge of engineering the world's first solid state loud speaker that is flat, using an ionized metal plate to create pressure variances that produce sound. Think of a speaker the size of a credit card that can fit into a wallet. The technology is aimed at the value conscious consumer and would be distributed through direct sales and partnerships with major electronics manufacturers.



Third Place: Automatic Traffic Barrel Machine
Team members: Bahareh Momenan (Bachelor of Applied Science Mechanical Engineering)
Business plan: Every year, tens of thousands of road workers are injured or killed while attempting to set up and take down traffic control systems on busy streets and highways. In addition to the cost in lives, the expenses associated with healthcare and disability claims is staggering. To address this issue, Ms. Momenan has developed a machine that can automatically distribute traffic barrels when towed behind another vehicle without putting lives at risk.

Graduate WINNERS



First Place: The Seasonal Absorption Thermal Energy Storage System (SATESS)
Team members: Dan Dicaire (Master of Applied Science Chemical Engineering)
Business plan: Mr. Dicaire is experimenting with various hybrid materials that can store thermal energy in a unit small enough for the typical residential home. The intent is for solar energy collected in the summer to heat a home throughout the winter. His business plan targets new home builders as well as existing energy suppliers with a profitable model that would see clean energy sold back to the homeowner at a cost lower than traditional fossil fuels.



Second Place: MicronSpec
Team members: Honglei Guo (Doctorate in Philosophy Electrical Engineering)
Business plan: Optical sensors have become increasingly pervasive throughout our society to monitor everything from human health, to the mechanical safety of aircraft and the structural integrity of buildings and bridges. Mr. Guo's Interrogator is designed to collect and process the data from tens of thousands of sensors *in situ* in real-time to better protect lives and property.



Third Place: MEDTECH Life
Team members: Marc Doumit (Doctorate in Philosophy Mechanical Engineering)
Business plan: MEDTECH Life aims to provide the public and private healthcare sectors with an affordable and non-invasive means of detecting skin cancer at an early stage using a pen-like USB scanning device and associated software. The goal is to pre-empt costly treatments and surgeries that burden an already strained healthcare system and negatively impact the lives of cancer sufferers.

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