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Entrepreneurship Week Provides Innovative Opportunities for Students

By Allie Jeppson



For one week in early April, Utah State University students with drive, dreams, and creativity found such attributes could prove especially rewarding.

The Jon M. Huntsman School of Business called it Entrepreneurship Week, and organizers from the student-led Entrepreneurship Club seemed intent on sparking innovative thinking campus-wide. In fact, those with business ideas and a good two-minute pitch, were offered a chance to compete for thousands of dollars in prizes in the school's elevator-pitch competition.

Some 20 teams were selected for the annual competition. That group was narrowed to 19 finalists that were offered the opportunity to make their pitch before members of the Founders Board of the Center For Entrepreneurial Excellence.

The top three teams took home prizes. Jordan Poulsen proposed an idea he called iJumpDrive, a business that would make connector devices that would allow information to be more easily transferred between a computer and an iPad. He took the \$3,000 first-place prize. Tyler Tolson's Denik, a company that makes customized notebooks, won the \$2,000 second prize. Seth Christensen's cattle breeding company, Christensen Elite Angus, took third place with \$1,000.

The Founders Board is made up of experienced entrepreneurs who have been around long enough to see companies with new ideas succeed and fail. They shared some tips about how they recognized a successful pitch.

For several judges, clarity when pitching an idea was the most important factor.

"Clear, succinct, concise descriptions of what it is they have, why it will make a difference and a demonstration of the grasp of the financial implications of what they want and are going to be able to achieve," said judge Dave Clark.

Judge Ryan Hemingway agreed.

"Just be really clear on how it works," Hemingway said. "Clear, clear, clear, and then get into all of the other stuff." For Judge Gavin Christensen, preparation was the winning factor.

"The number one thing was folks who actually took the time to go all the way through their business from front to back," Christensen said.

Other factors that affected the judges' decisions were things like enthusiasm, the potential viability of the proposed product itself and its market, investor success, timing, price, and protection.



Another event gave students from across campus the chance to promote their ideas to other members of the campus community who voted to see which ideas they liked best. Entrepreneurs staked out space along the sidewalk in front of the George S. Eccles Building. The event drew an assortment of companies, causes, and talent. Musicians performed, people looked at a water-filtration device created for developing countries, companies showed off their products, and a calf in a pen ended up being part of the festivities.

In what was described as "the perfect ending to a great week," the Entrepreneurship Week featured a BMX event that gave student vendors and community businesses a chance to promote their products.

Showcasing the talents of BMX professionals performing a diverse array of tricks from Rob Wise, Dave Thompson, and other members of the 5050 BMX team, the event served as a place to come and get to know more about the entrepreneurship opportunities that are available.