Tulane Business Model Competition announces finalists

March 28, 2019

The 2019 Tulane Business Model Competition will award more than $40,000 in cash prizes to promising student-led startups. The final round of the competition will take place on Monday, April 8, at Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business.

A cocktail napkin that can detect the presence of specific rape drugs, an inspection app that works closely with landlords and renters to ensure transparency in the rental process and an app that helps individuals improve their professional speaking style through automated voice analytics have been selected as the three finalists in the 2019 Tulane Business Model Competition.

Presented by the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Lepage Center) at Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business, the competition awards $40,000 in cash prizes to student-led startups and early-stage ventures from

across the country that demonstrate high-growth potential and a market-tested ability to adapt to customer needs. This year's event attracted 92 applications from 44 universities across the nation.

The Tulane Business Model Competition semifinal round took place on Wednesday, March 25, as part of the 11th annual New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), which the Freeman School co-produced with New Orleans non-profit The Idea Village. In addition to attending panels and fireside chats with national business leaders, semifinalists had a special opportunity to network with investors and mentors as part of NOEW.

Preceding the semifinals, the Lepage Center also held a showcase of student ventures, which are currently part of the student incubator and venture accelerator course, and an alumni venture showcase, which highlighted three companies founded by Tulane School of Science and Engineering alumni: Tympanogen, Fluence Analytics and Axosim.

"I am so proud of these three companies founded by our alumni," said Tulane School of Science and Engineering Dean Kimberly L. Foster. "It's so energizing to see the great work being done in commercialization at Tulane and in New Orleans."

On Wednesday, March 27, Tympanogen, Fluence Analytics and Axosim each received invitations to attend the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in the Netherlands as official United States delegates. GES is the preeminent annual gathering that convenes entrepreneurs, investors and their supporters globally.

At the end of the Tulane Business Model Competition, the six semifinalists received a special surprise. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, $10,000 in additional prize money was distributed among the six companies.

This year's finalists — **KnoNap** (George Washington University), **RentCheck** (Tulane University) and **Speeko** (University of Iowa) — will compete on Monday, April 8, in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex on Tulane University's uptown campus with the winners to be announced later that evening at the Lepage Center's annual Awards Gala at the Audubon Tea Room. The winning team will receive a grand prize of $25,000 and earn a spot in the International Business Model Competition in Provo, Utah, on May 9-10. The second-place team will receive a $10,000 prize, and the third-place team will receive $2,500.

“The quality of the competition gets better every year,” said Rob Lalka, executive director of the Lepage Center. “We doubled our applications this year, so this year’s semifinalists were truly the best of the best. I am incredibly grateful to our anonymous donor whose gift enables us to recognize all six of these companies, and I look forward to hearing the three finalists present once more on April 8.”

Serving as this year’s semifinal round judges were Stephanie Barksdale, Wallace Boston, Thomas Kennedy, Catherine Popper, Stella Templo, and Giffen Weinmann.

The final round of the Tulane Business Model Competition is free and open to the public. The Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Awards Gala is by invitation only. For more information about this year’s competition and gala, please contact Emily Egan, director of strategic initiatives at the Lepage Center, at 504-865-5462 or eegan@tulane.edu.