Tulane Business Model Competition announces 2021 semifinalists

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Lydia Winkler (MBA/JD ’19), left, and Marco Nelson (MBA ’19) pitch their venture RentCheck to judges at the 2019 Tulane Business Model Competition.

Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business has announced the six semifinalist teams that will face off in the 2021 Tulane Business Model Competition.

Hosted by the Freeman School's Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the competition rewards commercially viable student startups that demonstrate a market-tested ability to adapt to customers' needs. This year's event will award $125,000 in cash prizes to the three finalists.

"Over the last 20 years, the Tulane Business Model Competition has become Freeman's premier entrepreneurial event," said Freeman School Dean Ira Solomon. "In addition to offering meaningful funding for high-potential startups, we're proud that the competition also matches teams with experienced investors and mentors, enabling all participants to expand their networks and receive strategic guidance on their ventures. This year's submissions are not only a record in number but among the highest quality we have seen."

This year both the semifinal and final rounds will take place virtually during the week of March 22. The semifinal round will take place on Tuesday, March 23 with teams presenting their business models via video conference. Judges will then pick three teams to pitch their ventures in the final round on Thursday, March 25, to determine this year's first, second and third place prize winners. The final round of the virtual competition will take place during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), the premier digital experience celebrating entrepreneurship in our region, as part of "NOEW in Your Neighborhood."

"These semifinalists faced the most competitive application process in the 21-year history of the TBMC, with 119 applicants representing 73 schools all vying for these six spots," said Rob Lalka, executive director of the Lepage Center. "While we had to pivot quickly last year due to COVID-19, we decided to host a virtual competition again for strategic reasons. This format allows for broader student participation, a great mix of judges from all over, and opportunities for Tulane alums, investors, and others in our network to meet with and mentor the teams throughout the week of the competition. We look forward to hearing these semifinalists pitch and supporting them in so many ways as they learn, grow, and develop their businesses."

The winning team will receive a grand prize of $75,000. The runner up will receive a $30,000 prize, and the third-place team will receive $20,000.

The 2021 Tulane Business Model Competition semifinalists are:

- **3DuxDesign (Washington University St. Louis)** - 3DuxDesign is a social enterprise with a mission to unleash the creativity and inspire the change-maker in every child, on every continent.

- **Bloks (Tulane University and Georgia Tech University)** - Bloks enables startups to build their own mobile applications without coding.

- **Floe (Yale University)** - Floe is a cleantech startup tackling dangerous ice buildup on roofs by providing an intelligent, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly ice dam solution.

- **LiRA (University of North Carolina)** - LiRA provides next-generation voice restoration by developing an AI platform that recognizes specific facial motions associated with speech.

- **Rize (Tulane University)** - Rize works to connect small to midsized businesses that may not have an established internship program, to students looking to gain real-world work experience through short-term, paid projects.

- **springrose (Northwestern University)** - springrose aims to help womxn reclaim their daily experience through adaptive apparel designed with empathy.

For more information about this year's Tulane Business Model Competition, please contact Emily Egan, Lepage Center director of strategic initiatives, at 504-865-5462 or eegan@tulane.edu.