Great startup ideas get exposure, feedback during Pitch Friday Homecoming edition

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Josh McCoy of Tipzy, an app that allows music lovers to request songs from musicians or venue playlists for a fee, explains how his app works at the Pitch Friday competition held at A. B. Freeman School of Business during Wave Weekend 2023. (photo by Sabree Hill)

Tulane student entrepreneurs brought their startup ideas before Wave Weekend audiences during a homecoming round of Pitch Friday, competing for $1,500 as well as the first spot in the Grand Prize final round in April.

The event took place Friday, Oct. 20, at the A. B. Freeman School of Business, and was sponsored and funded by the Tulane University Innovation Institute, the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and the Tulane Association of Business Alumni.

The students had five minutes each to pitch their business models and then answered judges’ questions for five minutes.

The student startups, some of which are already operating as businesses with a customer base, included:

Cantaloupe AI

Rich Simmerman presented this recruitment platform that uses AI to match job seekers to hospitality jobs near them.

Kavali Campanella Eyewear

Kaalan Day pitched this eyewear company that uses influencers and other personalities to promote affordably priced sunglasses with stylish West Coast attitude.

The College Contemporary

Bobby Becker is the founder of this online, intercollegiate publication that seeks to elevate student journalism. Becker co-presented with Jordyn Addison.

Tipzy

Josh McCoy is behind this app that benefits businesses and patrons who listen to music at selected venues. The Tipzy app allows patrons to send song requests to musicians or bar playlists for a fee.

Watersport Experience

Cameron Tuths shared the vision of the New Jersey-based company that offers water-skiing, wakeboarding and other water-sports instruction for an hourly rate.

WavRC

Qixuan Liu and WavRC have an automated system that produces affordable custom-designed remote-control models (such as planes) for hobbyists.

Tipzy, whose presentation included a cameo by McCoy's grandmother dancing, was announced as the winner of the round. Timekia Mallery, senior program coordinator of the Albert Lepage Center and the force behind the Student Venture Incubator Program, presented the check to McCoy.

The judges' criteria included whether the business model solves a significant problem; how clearly the team's hypothes(es) are stated and whether they had been reliably tested; and how they planned to use the prize money. Judging criteria also assessed factors like novelty of the concept and market fit.

The volunteer judges, which included business experts, an alumnus and Tulane parents, were Anna deTiege Harris, Jennifer Scully Lerner, Scott Reamer, and Sofia Viscuso (B '22). Although only one competitor could claim the day's prize check, Lerner encouraged all the student entrepreneurs to keep pitching their businesses.

"Keep going. Keep competing," she counseled. "It was really hard to decide – so many good ones."

Pitch Fridays are held throughout the academic year. For more information, read about Pitch Fridays on the Lepage Center website.

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