Tulane Business Model Competition announces 2026 semifinalists

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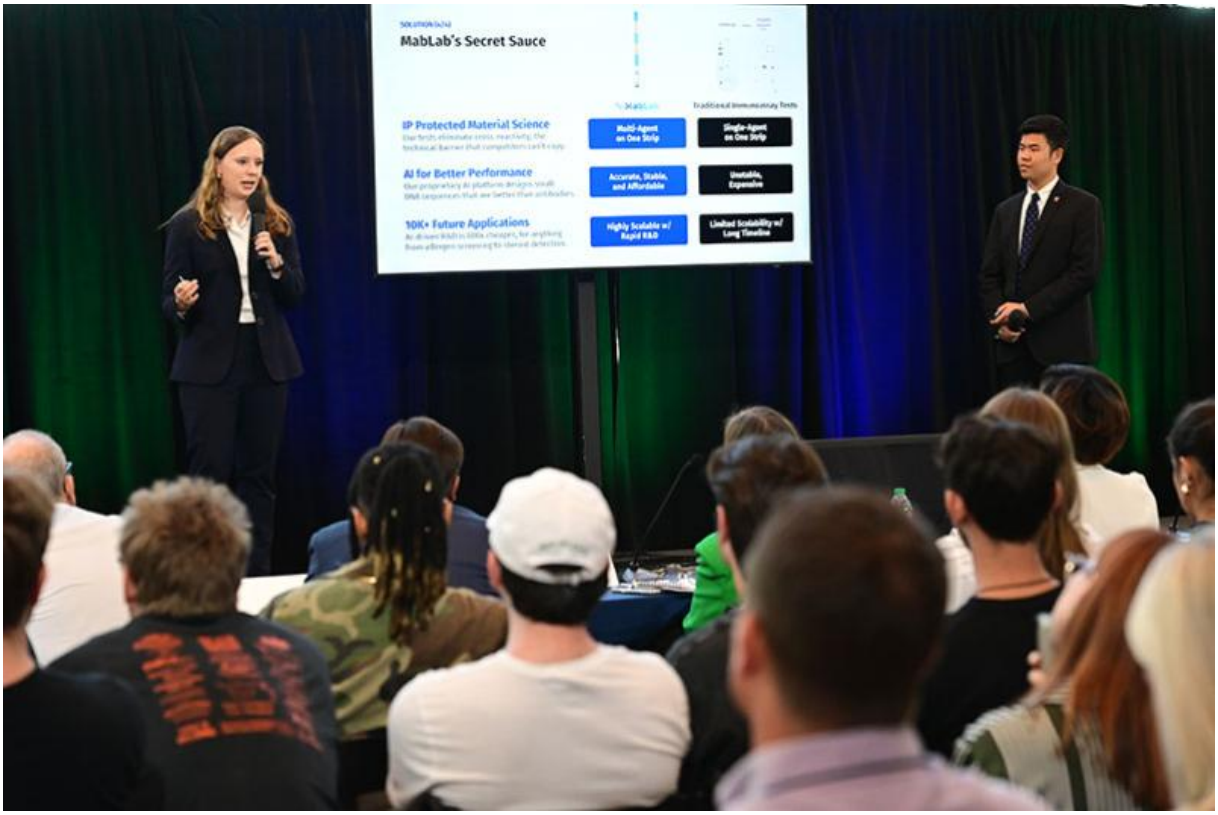

Vienna Sparks, left, and Skye Lam, co-founders of MabLab, deliver their grand-prize-winning pitch at last year's Tulane Business Model Competition. This year's competition will take place March 9-10 at the Freeman School.

Tulane University's Freeman School of Business has announced the six semifinalist teams that will face off in the 2026 Tulane Business Model Competition.

Hosted by the Freeman School's Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the global competition awards $125,000 in cash prizes to commercially viable student-led startups that demonstrate a market-tested ability to adapt to customers' needs.

This year's competition will take place the week of March 9 as part of New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), the annual event celebrating business innovation in the Gulf South. The semifinal round will be held Monday, March 9, with each team presenting its venture to a panel of guest judges. Three selected finalists will then pitch their ventures on Tuesday, March 10, competing for the $75,000 grand prize, $30,000 second-place prize, and $20,000 third-place prize.

“The Tulane Business Model Competition is a showcase of the most promising student ventures from across the country and around the world,” said Rob Lalka, executive director of the Lepage Center. "This year, it’s especially gratifying to see three Louisiana universities represented among our semifinalists. We have good reason to be excited about the quality, ambition and sophistication of student enterprises here in Louisiana.”

2026 Semifinalists

- **SensorySync (University of New Orleans)** is a digital platform designed to improve coordination and transparency in pediatric and neurodivergent therapy by bringing parents, therapists and care teams into one secure system. The platform enables therapists to track and verify progress while providing families with clear, easy-to-understand dashboards that show how therapy is working overtime. By focusing on therapist-verified outcomes rather than automation, Sensory Sync strengthens trust, accountability, and long-term care outcomes.

- **BRCĒ (Michigan State University)** is a patented material-technology startup developing advanced polymer-composite materials that improve stability, durability, and injury prevention across athletic, industrial, and medical-adjacent applications. Its proprietary Lattice-Grip® technology embeds directional grip and controlled tension directly into the material itself and has already been validated across every major U.S. professional sports league. Operating through a hybrid direct-to-consumer and licensing model, BRCĒ was profitable in its first year and is partnering with globally recognized brands including Nike, Adidas, Carhartt, and Stanley Black & Decker.

- **FarmMind (Louisiana State University)** is an AI-powered agricultural intelligence platform that helps farmers and agronomy consultants make faster, more confident decisions by turning research, regulations, soil data, and field

notes into clear, citation-backed recommendations. Often described as a “virtual agronomist,” FarmMind streamlines complex workflows, reduces costly mistakes, and simplifies compliance for modern agricultural operations. The platform is already being used by paying customers and recently became the first Louisiana team to win the National Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge.

- **NerView Surgical Inc. (McMaster University)** is a medical technology startup developing NerveSense™, a patent-pending imaging and AI platform that allows surgeons to see nerve tissue in real time during surgery—without dyes, electrodes, or tissue contact. By making nerve identification a visual and reproducible step in the operating room, NerView aims to reduce preventable nerve injuries and improve patient outcomes across high-risk surgical procedures.

- **Exactics (Tulane University)** is a biotechnology startup developing fast, affordable at-home diagnostic tests that deliver results anytime, anywhere—without labs, clinics, or long wait times. Beginning with the first-ever at-home Lyme disease test and expanding into sexual health and other infectious conditions, Exactics enables people to diagnose and move toward treatment within minutes. Through a capital-efficient licensing and platform model, the company is redefining how diagnostics are accessed and delivered at the point of need.

- **Métopi (University of Virginia)** is a healthcare technology startup developing the Portahaler™, a compact, wearable inhaler platform designed to ensure life-saving medication is accessible when emergencies occur. By eliminating the bulk and stigma of traditional rescue devices, Métopi aims to improve real-world adherence and outcomes for patients with respiratory disease and acute migraine. The company is advancing its platform through clinical validation and a pharmaceutical licensing model to bring next-generation emergency therapies to patients at scale.

Both rounds of the competition will take place in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex on Tulane University's uptown campus and are free and open to the public. For more information about this year's competition, contact Timekia Mallery, Lepage Center manager of student programs, at 504-865-5455 or tmallery@tulane.edu.