

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Student Entrepreneurs Awarded \$60,000 In 5th Annual 13D Competition

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Three University of the Virgin Islands student entrepreneurs earned \$60,000 at the 5th annual 13D Entrepreneurship Competition on April 21, on the St. Thomas Campus. The 13D Competition, sponsored by 13D Research and Viya, formerly Innovative, is designed to eliminate the obstacle of financing for UVI student entrepreneurs who have developed potentially profitable businesses, but have no access to start-up capital.

Last fall, nearly 50 teams started with interesting ideas and began the rigorous journey from customer discovery to business model development to business execution. Ten teams presented at the competition's semi-final round on Friday, April 7. Of those 10, five moved on to the final round. According to Dr. Tim Faley, Sokoloff distinguished

professor of entrepreneurship, all five competitors had viable business plans that could be profitably executed.

“Dr. Metts’ and my goal is to make it very difficult for the judges to select the competition winners,” said Dr. Faley. “We could not be prouder of all the teams that presented today. They are all winners.”

Karima Reid, a UVI nursing major who is knowledgeable about the food-health connection, was given the \$30,000 first place award for Speedy Redemption Lentil Burgers, which creates, in a packable form, the vegetarian protein that Speedy Redemption Deli uses for its vegetarian burgers. Customers have demanded the flavorful burger patties in order to create their own vegetarian dishes at home. The new firm will be able to satisfy this market demand by providing the vegetarian protein to local groceries and restaurants.

“It’s an honor to be the first place winner, and the money is going to enable us to expand” said Reid. “But I wasn’t surprised by the outcome. I knew we would place within the top three because the business is profitable. We already have a good number of steady customers.”

Gerald Bellot, a junior applied mathematics major and Joy Grant, a sophomore social science major, were granted the \$20,000 second place award for their Da Vinci Health App, which also won a second place prize and \$3,000 in the global health game design competition, Games4Health. Da Vinci is a smartphone app that combines mental exercise with physical movement, a combination that research has shown to enhance mental acuity and physical condition.

“We have been preparing for this year’s competition since September,” said Bellot. “It was a long process, but we learned a lot and it was a great experience. Winning second place was a huge accomplishment that was worth the hard work.”

“Our next step will be to start doing business and release Da Vinci to the app store,” added Grant. “It feels great to get support from UVI and the community. We look forward to more opportunities to challenge ourselves.”

Aaron Gumbs, a Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) major at UVI, was given the \$10,000 third place award for King Events, an event and wedding planning service. The firm, which specializes in custom event design and implementation, is a one stop shop for those who want to create an event or plan their wedding in the Virgin Islands.

Entrepreneurs who made it to the final round of the 13D Competition also included Benaiah Nicholson with her bicycle rental stations called Bikes for Rent; and Jessica Taylor with her mobile pizza truck called Twisted Toppings.

“You are all winners just for moving your ideas forward to this point,” said UVI President David Hall. “Entrepreneurship has become part of who we are and what we do at UVI. This program truly exemplifies our model.”

The 13D Student Competition is the culmination of a series of four independently-run entrepreneurial programs at UVI. Students start the fall with a hackathon where new phone app concepts are imagined. Some move on to the “design slam” competition where clickable prototype apps are developed. The Business Design Grant Program

moves students from product or concept design to generating a blueprint for a viable business. All of these programs are financially underwritten by outside firms, the majority of which are RT Park companies.

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