

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Rewards Students For Innovation And Entrepreneurship

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University of the Virgin Islands Hackathon participants, Business Design Program participants, 13D competition competitors and UVIDEA club officers of both the Albert A. Sheen and St. Thomas Campuses were recognized at the first Annual Innovation and Entrepreneurship gala luncheon held on Saturday, May 12, UVI has announced.

This event celebrated the growing innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem at UVI. The Hackathon, Business Design Program and 13D competition students all received awards.

Hackathon

Of the 27 students who competed in the Nov. 17 and 18, 2017 Hackathon, 12 were awarded cash prizes for their outstanding efforts.

The “Best Hack” winners from the Albert A. Sheen Campus were the team of Kedisha Charles and Ajani Gordon who created Hurricane Busters. Hurricane Busters is an app that would give alerts of important information after a storm such as curfew hours and location of the day’s MRE or tarp distributions. The app would also use mesh interface that allows messages to be passed along a network of bluetooth connected phones.

The “Best Hack” on St. Thomas was also focused on post-disaster communications when cell and Wi-Fi signals are weak or non-existent. Team C-net, consisting of Eliakin del Rosario and Ajodie Dasent, created an app that allows users to send and receive messages leveraging the radio transmitting or receiving capability that your smart phone has built into it. Their app would turn on this phone feature and allow the user to send and receive messages.

The “Most Innovative” hack, Gamestorm, created by Amali Krigger and Candace Mootoo would allow you to play multi-player games on your phone with people within your phone’s Bluetooth range. The other “Most Innovative” hack was awarded to team Blu of which Gerald Bellot and Joy Grant were members. They used a block-chain technology (the same one used to validate bitcoin transactions) to authenticate messages passed along a Bluetooth network of phones, thus assuring your sent message is only seen by the intended receiver.

The “Most Impactful” hacks addressed post-storm distribution and psychological issues. Duryan Cozier, Jamilla Connor, Ira Francis, and David Jeffers, members of the The Alleviator created an app that would allow you to do an emotional self-assessment or perform one for your children. If your assessment score indicated you could use some trauma-related counseling, the app would connect you to the local appropriate service provider that specialized in your area of need. The ReDS app (Resource Distribution System), created by Jesus Arista, would help federal, local, and private agencies coordinate the distribution of goods and services, prioritizing those most in need.

Business Design Grant Program

This year a record 12 students across both UVI campuses successfully completed the Business Design Grant Program training and rigorous deliverables to earn a \$750 award.

The students were:

- Ulric Baptiste Jr.
- Gerald Bellot
- Jiame Berry
- Amiel Brown
- Joy Grant
- Jaecena Howell
- Jessica LaPlace
- Coral Megahy
- Marco Ponce
- Nathaniel Robinson

- Nina Scott
- Andre Williams

The Business Design Grant Program is a “learn and earn” program that allows students to learn and practice the entrepreneurial skill of transforming an idea into the structure of a business and then assess the potential viability of that business.

“Given that most ideas turn out not to be viable businesses, the program rewards students for completing the deliverables, regardless of the potential business’ viability. It is business shaping and evaluation skill-development that is rewarded, not the result,” said Dr. Faley.

13D Student Entrepreneurship Competition

The 13D Student Entrepreneurship Competition focuses on that step of business development. Many of the students listed above also went on to participate in the 13D Student Entrepreneurship Competition.

“This year there is no first, second, and third place prizes in the 13D Student Entrepreneurship Competition. We changed the competition to look more like ‘shark tank’,” Dr. Faley said. “The student teams had to pitch both the viability of their businesses and the amount of funding they were seeking. The judges then had to decide which teams would receive what amount of start-up funding from \$60,000 they had available to invest in these businesses,” Dr. Faley said.

The event culminated with the funding announcement for the 13D competitors. The judges were charged with distributing the \$60,000 in sponsored monies to the teams with the guideline that no team receive more than \$30,000. In the end, the judges funded all six teams that presented in the final round of the competition; most at the exact level pitched.

The awardees were:

- “Feel Da' Qi” received \$24,400 in startup funding.
- The St. Croix based company is a wellness (non-traditional medicine) therapy clinic and teahouse. UVI student Coral Megahy teamed up with non-student Karisma Elie to start this business.
- “Foodeiz” received \$15,500 in startup funding.
- The St. Thomas based company will sell local cultural foods packaged as gifts for tourists. The company is founded by UVI students Sarah Sookraj and Ashley Adams (both Hospitality and Tourism Management majors).
- “Hinspiree” received \$3,550 in startup funding.
- The St. Thomas company will create inspirational theater aimed at young women in the Territory. The company is founded by UVI theater major Nyaila Callwood,
- M.I.L.A. Creation” received \$3,550 in startup funding.
- The St. Thomas based promotional and social media firm focuses on creative promotions for small businesses in the Territory. The firm is founded by UVI student Jamilla Connor.
- “Teho Travels” received \$3,200 in startup funding.

- The St. Thomas based business will perform historical short plays (on the cruise ship docks) and create culture-focus travel packages. The company is founded by UVI student Khalarni Rivers.
- “Style-up” received \$9,800 in startup funding.

The St. Croix based app-development business is creating a phone application for hair stylists and their customers to better manage appointments. The company’s founder is UVI student Jaecena Howell.

The three programs were made possible through the kind sponsorship of 13D Research, Viya, Nearix, JH Capital and Media Source.

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