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Sold-Out Startup Weekend SLO Produces 12 Startups

SAN LUIS OBISPO – More than 80 participants on 12 teams presented their prototypes at San Luis Obispo's first Startup Weekend, which ended Sunday night, Jan. 22. The sold-out, three-day event brought community members and Cal Poly students together in a dynamic environment to build their ideas in just 54 hours.

Mike Viheula, a winemaker and entrepreneur from Paso Robles, led his team of seven to victory with the creation of Haberdash, an intuitive fashion DNA application. "It seemed fun, it seemed fresh, and I could apply some of the things I wanted to do," he said. "We could be an aggregator, helping smaller stores get their products viewed or sold by a larger market."

Viheula's team was one of the most diverse; both Cal Poly students and community members brought the concept to life.

Cal Poly student Chris Petersilge organized Startup Weekend with three other students. "This was an interdisciplinary effort, from the planning to the teams," he said. "Our goal from the beginning was to promote the integration of skills, ideas and passion."

Jonathan York, professor and co-founder of the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, saw Startup Weekend as the beginning of a culture change in the community and on campus. "Not only did the participants accomplish amazing things this weekend, but they're bridging a gap. Community members and students from all different areas came together, and that's something we need to see more of," he said.

A panel of four judges critiqued the teams on customer validation, business model and execution. Judges included faculty members and local business executives. Mentors also visited throughout the weekend to coach teams and guide them through problems.

As the winner, Viheula and his team will have the opportunity to continue to refine Haberdash through the Kauffman Foundation's FastTrac program, thanks to a generous donation by the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Second-place team Grapple a social "bucket list" site, earned a chance to work on their idea at the Hatchery, the center's incubator program.

The weekend was sponsored by Cal Poly's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and donations from Greenstart, iFixit, Mindbody, Yes We Do Apps, Brown Dog Partners, Softec, Level and others.

Some of the additional prototypes created over the weekend included Workout Log, an intuitive gym-friendly application; misheard.me, a music and word algorithm game; TigerSmash, a revolutionary local deals app; and Cosmic Shelf, a Kinect movement-powered virtual bookshelf.

About the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship:

The center is designed to open the world of entrepreneurial opportunity to Cal Poly students and faculty members and promotes entrepreneurial activity, scholarship and dialogue across the university and throughout greater San Luis Obispo County.

About Startup Weekend:

Startup Weekend is a global grassroots movement of active and empowered entrepreneurs who are learning the basics of founding startups and launching successful ventures. The nonprofit organization is headquartered in Seattle, Wash. Startup Weekend organizers and facilitators can be found in more than 150 cities and 30 nations around the world.

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