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Cal Poly Students Find Success at San Diego State University Business Competition

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Two Cal Poly business teams recently won awards for their innovative business models at San Diego State University’s Lavin School of Entrepreneurship LeanModel Start-up Competition.

LunaLight, a solar rechargeable LED lantern designed by Cal Poly team members Kimberly Smith, Jessica Bell and Gabby Igel for use in developing countries, earned second place overall. The team was awarded $500 in a “quick pitch” contest and another $3,500 for advancing their business. LunaLight competed against 14 other university teams.

“I think doing so well in this competition with the overwhelming positive feedback has created an urgency to move forward with the LunaLight,” said Igel, a senior engineering major who was joined by business and engineering students on the LunaLight team.

Mr. Eco, an environmental rap superhero created by senior business major Brett Edwards, was awarded $500 for his display and performance at the competition’s trade show. Mr. Eco promotes eco-friendly lifestyles.

“It was a great experience to be introduced to other collegiate entrepreneurs from across the state and hear about their start-ups,” Edwards said. “After hearing all the Cal Poly pitches, it was apparent that we are doing something special with our programs. I am lucky to have been part of the culture of entrepreneurship that has developed at Cal Poly.”

The LeanModel Competition stresses minimizing costs, testing assumptions, gathering customer/user feedback, and building flexible and iterative business models.

Cal Poly’s entrepreneurship curriculum prepares students for this new wave of lean startup creation – just as the university’s strong engineering and business programs give students the skills to create the next generation of innovative products and services, said Jonathan York, associate professor of entrepreneurship and cofounder of the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

“Competitions like this really allow Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing motto to shine. Most of these concepts were hatched in business and engineering classes, and then it was up to the students to work together to take advantage of our resources to make them real,” York said. “Our students can absolutely compete on this level, and I’d like to see them take advantage of more opportunities to have their ideas seen.”

Each team found out about the competition through the university’s growing world of entrepreneurial resources. Ideas cultivated in classes and at Cal Poly events eventually become reality through the resources and opportunities offered by the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

About the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

CIE opens a world of entrepreneurial opportunity to Cal Poly students and faculty members and promotes entrepreneurial activity, scholarship and dialogue across the university and throughout San Luis Obispo County.

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