

Social Causes as the Focus of Students' Business Plans

Freshly pressed business attire, booths adorned with detailed executive summaries and the unceasing sound of crowds filled Weter Hall and Martin Square on Wednesday, 13th April of 2011. A maze of projects lined the hall, while eager participants pitched their ideas to faculty, students and judges.

The grand prize? \$2,500 and the honor of being the first-place winner at Seattle Pacific's annual Social Venture Plan Competition (SVPC).

At this year's SVPC, held on April 13 from 2 to 6 p.m., a group from University of Washington won the grand prize for their project called "Pterofin," created to supply generated power to homes, buildings and offices.



Pterofin - the champion of SVPC 2011

A team of SPU students, Spektrum, won the pioneer prize, or second place, and earned \$1,500. Spektrum created a pure pump system that uses power from running water to transport water to villages. At the same time, the system would also power an ultra-violet light system to rid the water of contamination.

This year, SPU also hosted three teams all the way from Vietnam. These teams pitched plans that would benefit and support the surrounding communities in their own country.

In December, Don Summers, SPU clinical instructor and organizer of SVPC, was asked to teach a social venture class at Duy Tan University in Da Nang, Vietnam. The university held its own social venture competition in February, and the three winning teams came to participate on SPU's campus.

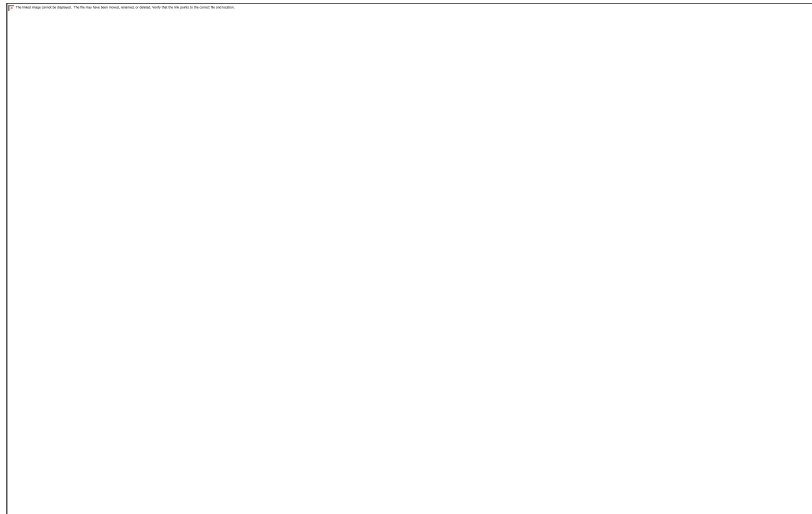
"It was very heartwarming, very inspiring to see that the students in Vietnam were very much like the students here," Summers said. "They have a passion for making change."

However, the Vietnamese students faced some challenges right before the competition - they did not receive visas until one week before SVPC.

“It’s part of the fun ... stress, but fun,” said Binh Bui, a student from Da Nang. Bui and partner Dung Tra worked on a business plan they called “Craft Village Tourism,” in which Vietnamese citizens offer tours to different attractions.

“We will extract about 70 percent of our profit to pay back to the community to help them sustain their life and develop their own traditional craft,” Bui said.

Thao Nguyen and Khue Duong created a business plan for an art center located near an airport in Da Nang. The ACL Art Gallery would sell different artworks that street children had created for their target market: tourists.



From left to right: Võ Nguy?n Thùy Trang, Duong Th? Uy?n Khuê and team leader Nguy?n Minh Th?o of ACL Art Gallery

“We will gain revenue to give money to the poor children and to unprivileged children to help them have a better life and to develop their art skills,” Duong said.

SPU’s own students were excited for their new competitors.

Senior business major Jon Martin said he looked forward to competing with the new participants. *“We’re doing business with everyone, we’re impacting everyone, and they’re impacting us,”* he said.

The effort of the Vietnamese students was awarded with certificates of commendation for one group and two other individuals.

Sources: http://www.spu.edu/depts/sbe/mentorship/2011_SVPC_report.asp

<http://www.thefalcononline.com/article.php?id=7619>