UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

May 25, 2018

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Good Day Sunshine

Thanks to lightweight material and innovative and durable design along with a solid business plan, UC Santa Barbara student tech entrepreneur team MoreSolar came away victorious at the final round of the 2017-18 Technology Management Program (TMP) New Venture Competition (NVC). Their innovation — a wind-driven solution to inefficiencies caused by the accumulation of dust and dirt on large-scale photovoltaic systems — garnered the team the $10,000 first prize as well as a $2,500 Impact Award.

Competition was tough but collegial among the six teams that competed Thursday, May 24, at a packed Corwin Pavilion. Laying it down for a panel of expert judges and an enthusiastic audience of peers, faculty and mentors, they culminated the eight-month long contest with a pitch and a question-and-answer session.

The finalist teams, whittled down from an initial pool of 32, represented diverse technologies and industries. Among the top six were Adomi, which seeks to address California’s housing shortage with a scalable solution that is also profitable to homeowners, and Okra Systems, software for engineers that streamlines the process of selecting and qualifying microcontrollers. Snip, a social media platform for podcast lovers, allows users to curate and share podcasts, while Soilight utilizes the microbes in soil to provide energy for low-powered applications. Veneta, a web- and mobile-based software service, improves the efficiency of scientific research and development with efficient inventory management.

In addition to top winner MoreSolar, the finalists walked away with cash prizes as well. Adomi took the $7,500 Second Place prize, as well as a $2,500 Impact Award and the $2,500 People’s Choice Award. Snip won the $5,000 Third Place prize. Soilight walked away with a $2,500 People’s Choice award and a $2,500 Honorable Mention. Okra Systems and Veneta each garnered $2,500 Honorable Mention awards also.

While TMP Entrepreneurship Director David Adornetto said he would have welcomed a six-way tie, alas, that is not the nature of the competition. However, he did remind the participants that though the New Venture Competition has come to an end for them, their careers as tech entrepreneurs has just begun. The teams join the ranks of previous NVC winners, many who have gone on to successfully launch their business ventures, including Inogen, Apeel Sciences, Salty Girl Seafood, Milo Sensors and EV Match.

“I would love to keep working with you,” he told the participants, “and now we have the facility to do it, and the programming.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.