

UW Oshkosh students take first place in largest, most diverse Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament yet



Twelve student teams traveled from nine University of Wisconsin System campuses Saturday, April 22 for the 2017 Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament, held at the Discovery Building in Madison.

Madison, WI— What do dirty dishes, expensive textbooks and misbehaving cats all have in common? They were all inspiration for student business ideas that competed in the biggest, most diverse Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament yet.

This year's statewide competition took place April 22 in Madison and welcomed 12 student teams from nine University of Wisconsin System campuses.

Partnership with the regional comprehensive campuses was instrumental in bolstering student involvement this year. Eight campuses hosted qualifying competitions, many of them for the very first time. These competitions helped to recruit the largest pool of competing teams in WBIT history from a larger geography across the state and an array of business interests, from veterinary sciences to food and beverages.

Teams were challenged to identify and test their business assumptions early to quickly identify customers and market potential, then present the findings—focusing on what they learned—in a brief 10-minute presentation to a panel of judges.

Judges Al Hartman of Angels on the Water, Troy Vosseller of gener8tor, and Cheryl Mitchell of the UW-Milwaukee Small Business Development Center evaluated each pitch, concentrating on how each aligned with Lean Startup principles.

Taking third place, UW-Milwaukee students Jared Judge and Jordan Hirsch presented BookLive, an app designed to strengthen partnerships between event planners and entertainers.

Second place winner Kristen Holtan, a UW-Whitewater student, described her idea to make longboarding and snowboarding safer—especially at night—while raising awareness of social issues.

The winning team, Upright Kids, is comprised of UW Oshkosh students Dylan Parks and Brad Ploch. Their pitch detailed the dangers of sitting for long periods of time and their solution, a customizable and affordable standing desk for kids in grades K-8. Their presentation detailed their work with teachers and school administrators to improve their business plan.

On top of a \$2,000 cash prize courtesy of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Upright Kids also won paid travel to Silicon Valley, where they will compete in the International Business Model Competition (IBMC) for an additional \$25,000.

About the Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament

WBIT is an entrepreneurship competition open to undergraduate and graduate students attending any two- or four-year University of Wisconsin school across the state (except UW-Madison). It teaches cutting-edge Lean Startup business development tools, provides business mentorship, and allows participants to compete at a state level for a chance to win seed funding for their idea as well as a chance to compete internationally at the 2017 International Business Model Competition (IBMC) scheduled to be held in Silicon Valley.

This year, WiSys Technology Foundation partnered with the UW-Extension to expand and enhance the WBIT. The new partnership will build on the success of WBIT while using WiSys' connections to the regional comprehensive campuses across the UW System, as well as the two-year colleges, to grow the competition in the years to come.

About WiSys Technology Foundation

WiSys Technology Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) supporting organization of the University of Wisconsin System. WiSys supports 11 four-year universities, 13 freshman-sophomore UW College campuses and statewide UW-Extension to identify innovative technologies and bring them to the marketplace.

About UW-Extension

University of Wisconsin-Extension provides statewide access to university resources and research so the people of Wisconsin can learn, grow and succeed at all stages of life. UW-Extension carries out this tradition of the Wisconsin Idea – extending the boundaries of the university to the boundaries of the state – through its four divisions of [continuing education](#), [cooperative extension](#), [business and entrepreneurship](#), and [broadcast and media innovations](#).