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# University of Dayton Business School Names Business Plan Contest Semifinalists, Elevator Pitch Winners

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## NEWS RELEASE

### UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON BUSINESS SCHOOL NAMES BUSINESS PLAN CONTEST SEMIFINALISTS, ELEVATOR PITCH WINNERS

DAYTON, Ohio — Innovative business ideas ranging from online funeral services to infant formula delivery systems took home prizes in the first round of the University of Dayton's 2010-2011 Business Plan Competition.

"Business plan entries continue to show the University's and the region's strengths in technology and innovation," said Dean McFarlin, chair of the University's management and marketing department and NCR Professor of Global Leadership Development. "A considerable number of entries were online businesses or technology-based."

Now in its fifth year, the competition offers nearly \$120,000 in total support, with a \$20,000 top prize, along with expert advice on transforming a great idea into a viable, marketable, innovative business plan.

"The essence of a successful entrepreneur is learning and persistence. It's a long process," McFarlin said. "Creating a viable company requires learning, refining and giving it another shot. Our job is to help people sharpen their ideas and encourage them to keep going."

More than 190 University of Dayton students, alumni and local entrepreneurs submitted 90 entries and competed in the Oct. 30 elevator pitch contest, the first round of the competition, McFarlin said. Last year, the competition drew 82 entries.

Ten entries will move on to the new five-minute semifinal cameo round and will each earn \$1,000 for presenting in that round. Not all elevator pitch winners were selected as semifinalists and not all semifinalists were elevator pitch winners.

Of the 10 elevator pitch winners, all are University of Dayton students; all of the cameo round semifinalists are University students or alumni.

Elevator pitch winners are:

- **First place, \$1,500:** Katie Sunday; MissApp, a mobile application targeted to the women smartphone users.

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- **Second, \$1,000:** James Merlo; Infant Innovations, an easily portable nipple cap for bottled water that delivers infant formula safely into clean water.
- **Third, \$500:** Katie Sunday; Gigaroo, an online platform to connect musicians with booking agents and venues.
- **Fourth: \$500:** Aaron Pugh; The Loader, automatic clothing folder.

Other elevator pitch winners of \$250: Ryan Buckingham, EternalRestAssured.com, online funeral marketing; Garrett Coleman, Hammerstep, touring dance company; Andy Hill, TalkToMe Media, social media marketing for small businesses; Victoria Lockett, FindYourInvestor.com, connecting entrepreneurs and investors; Angelina Rosati, Gourmet to Go, traveling food truck for tweens; Bonnie Zhou, Get Connected!, premium online grocery shopping.

Ten cameo round semifinalists were selected:

- Elevator pitch winners Buckingham, Hill, Lockett, Menlo and Sunday.
- T&T Fuel Consultants, improving fuel efficiency in tractors.
- Patrick Mergler, MyInsuranceComparison.com, online auto insurance shopping.
- Haden Swegal, Spray on Sponsorship, airbrushed tattoos as advertising medium.
- Matt Veryser, BrainRack, online crowdsourcing.
- Michael Weaver, DECX Modular Decking System, do-it-yourself decks.

Five finalists will emerge from the cameo round to compete for the \$20,000 top prize. All finalists also will be assigned outside mentors to help develop complete business plans. Final presentations will be held in late March; winners are announced at the School of Business Administration's entrepreneurship program banquet in April.

New this year will be the opportunity for the top three finalists to pitch their ideas to The Connor Foundation Seed Fund for up to an additional \$50,000 in loans or convertible debt, McFarlin said. The Connor Foundation wants to support University alumni and students who are ready to take the next step in growing new businesses.

The University of Dayton is recognized nationally for its innovative programs for student entrepreneurs. The Princeton Review and *Entrepreneur* magazine ranked the program in the past five years as one of the top-10 programs in the nation.

All sophomore entrepreneurship majors are given \$5,000 loans from the Crotty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to start their own businesses. Flyer Angels gives undergraduates hands-on experience in investing in new businesses.

Flyer Enterprises, composed of seven student-run businesses on campus, is the fourth largest student-run operation in the nation, with more than \$1.4 million in annual sales.

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