

Naturalis wins Vincent Hosang UWI Venture Capital Competition

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Executive Director of MSBM, Dr. David McBean; Marketing and Communications of Caribbean Food Delights and Vincent HoSang Family Foundation Jalessa Muschette; second place winner team Go Motion Design Studio; 1st place Naturalis; third place winner Artel and advisor to the Vincent HoSang Entrepreneurship Programme, Douglas Lindo.

Brandon Campbell founder of Naturalis wooed judges of the Vincent HoSang UWI Venture Competition with his technologically savvy products that will disrupt Jamaica's agriculture sector, to secure top prize at the recently held finals.

For his innovative invention of equipment geared at increasing productivity within the agricultural sector, the Mona School of Business and Management (MSBM)-hosted competition provided the perfect platform for the fusion of science, technology and business.

Inside the UWI Regional Headquarters, Mona Campus, students from various faculties nervously waited to pitch their ideas in the hope of securing the opportunity to develop their own companies.

The atmosphere was charged with youthful euphoria as the nine finalists made their final presentations at the 16th staging of the competition.

The ideas presented spanned disciplines such as beauty, bio-fuel, cash apps, disaster preparedness, as well as graphic design, to name a few. All students utilised various aspects of science and technology, which enhanced the overall procedure of the business.

At the end of each pitch, Sherene Duncan Clarke, General Manager at Regus; Lisandra Rickards, CEO of Soul Career; Anthony Lawrence, Agricultural Entrepreneur and Kadeen Mairs, CEO of Dolla Financial, came together to give meaningful advice to each presenter after reviewing the business plans.

During the awards ceremony, which followed, Campbell was elated as Naturalis was announced the winner of the Vincent HoSang UWI Venture Competition Finals 2020. Team Naturalis walked away with a cash prize of \$300,000, plus an all-expense-paid trip to New York to tour the facilities of the benefactors, the HoSang family.

“This competition has been quite a journey. I am a science and technology student with no real business background, so I have to say thank you to the mentors who helped to guide my team throughout the competition,” said Campbell.

According to Campbell’s mentor Shanalee Cawley, who is the 2017 Vincent HoSang UWI Venture Competition first-place winner: “We went through hours of preparation for Brandon to be able to present today. He is a good presenter naturally and his product is very strong, so my focus was just to make sure he understood the business model canvas to bring across to the judges. A lot of these science students just need a business-minded individual to bring across their ideas.”

Naturalis is a manufacturing company that focuses on creating technologically savvy products that will disrupt Jamaica’s agriculture sector and boost the overall economy.

“These products will help to lower food prices and help farmers to better understand the elements needed for a greater yield,” Campbell explained.

Second place went to Go Motion Design Studios (GMDS), which is a graphic and animation company started by Delroy McPherson.

“I plan to use the \$200,000 cash prize to get better equipment, which will help to clear up the backlog of orders and put the company in a better position for growth,” he said.

Winner of the JMMB Joan Duncan Award for Corporate Social Responsibility and also third-place winner was team Artel, which created a software geared at monitoring the population and infrastructure during a natural disaster.

“We chose not only to collect data for this software, but to have training sessions with the residents of communities in Westmoreland,” said Tracy-Ann Hyman co-founder of Artel. “We want to encourage persons when they are opening businesses to consider the social components, not just making a profit,” she continued.

Jalessa Muschette, Marketing and Communication Manager for Caribbean Food Delights and the Vincent HoSang Foundation acknowledged the hard work and dedication by the staff and students of MSBM.

“The HoSang family is proud to be a part of this competition and stand by its commitment to assisting the Mona School of Business & Management in the continued success of the competition year after year,” she said during her greetings at the awards ceremony.

Representing the JMMB Joan Duncan Foundation, a multi-year sponsor of the competition, Kim Mair, CEO, stated that the company is proud to stand as a partner of the Vincent HoSang Foundation and the MSBM to continue supporting initiatives that will build Jamaica and transform lives. “Entrepreneurs are critical to the long-term health of our economy as they assist in creating jobs and expanding human welfare,” said Mair

In his remarks, Nari Williams-Singh, Director General of the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority, a platinum sponsor said the programme was not only succeeding in building successful student entrepreneurs, but building an appropriate mindset. “With the business environment continuously changing, MSBM and its partners are preparing young entrepreneurs with the right skills needed to be successful,” he said.

The competition was first held in 2002, with the objective of harnessing the talents and skills of students within the UWI community and to facilitate the development of their ideas into full-fledged businesses. Since inception, many participating teams have been able to successfully transition their business concepts into commercially viable entities. Several teams have also moved on to represent the UWI at the National Business Model Competition, placing in the top four each year.