

THE MACKLIN BUSINESS INSTITUTE AND CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP at Montgomery College



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Student 'Quick Pitch' Competition kindles entrepreneurial spark

Before a good idea can be turned into a business, it must be refined into a well honed presentation and "pitched" successfully to potential partners and investors. Fourteen students at Montgomery College recently experienced what it takes to construct a well developed business idea through the first-ever Macklin Quick Pitch competitions.

The competitions were held Nov. 2 on the Rockville Campus and Nov. 9 on the Germantown Campus. Seven students on each campus made their five-minute pitches and answered questions from panels of judges. Students demonstrated a wealth of ideas ranging from food service (Asian organic restaurant, a Jamaican catering business and a campus omelet service), to sports programs (basketball league for disabled children), to gaming (strategy tools and an on-campus gaming outlet), retailing (Bolivian products e-store and sports accessories store), technology (CD/DVD slideshow presentations), and services (home remodeling, respite care for the elderly, and trash recycling).

"The breadth of ideas and the enthusiasm and seriousness of the student presenters confirms our belief that the College is overflowing with entrepreneurial ideas," said Robert Snyder, director of the Macklin Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE). The ideas and the students who participated were diverse in their age, sex and ethnic backgrounds, a reflection of the College's unique student population.

The two winners were Richard Engram, who took the Rockville competition, and Eva Gao, who won at Germantown. Engram's winning pitch was to develop a Global Business Team Management game, which he modeled after the principles of the ancient Chinese military strategy text. Guo's idea was to create an organic Asian food restaurant, called "Organic 9."

A basic aim of the Quick Pitch competition was to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit of the student body. Judging by the turnout and enthusiasm, the competition sparked more than a few creative minds. Richard Engram, the Rockville winner and a Web design and gaming major, said, "The Quick Pitch competition was a truly wonderful experience and should continue to be part of the Montgomery College experience. This and other creative entrepreneurial endeavors would give Montgomery College students a realistic view of the business world and, hopefully, inspire an innovative spirit to prepare all of us for this continually changing global economy."

Judges for the competitions comprised representatives from business (Henry Bernstein of Scheer Partners and Archisha Mehan of Commerce Bank), academia (Melissa Carrier and Eric McCoy of the Robert H. Smith School of Business of the University of Maryland), and the County Department of Economic Development (Duc Duong and Raul Medrano). Evaluations of the presentations were based on originality,



photo by Donald Rejonis

Quick Pitch Rockville Campus winner Richard Engram with CFE Director Robert Snyder.

market need, likelihood of implementation and presentation quality.

All presenters received certificates of participation, which recognized their excellent efforts. The two winners each received \$250 prizes and the opportunity to meet with CFE staff to further develop their business ideas. "Our hope," said Snyder, "is that some of these students will follow through with their ideas and

turn them into real businesses."

The Quick Pitch competition was organized by the Macklin Center for Entrepreneurship, which assists Montgomery County small businesses grow and brings business resources to the College. The competition was supported by the College's Make It Happen Innovation Grant initiative, which fosters innovative educational programs to enhance the

College's mission.

The Quick Pitch competition will return in spring 2007 to each campus location for another round of small business envisioning. Inquiries about Quick Pitch or other Center for Entrepreneurship programs should be directed to Robert Snyder, director of the center (301) 650-1351 or Carol Sosner, the center's business development specialist (301) 650-1355.

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