



**April 8, 2019**

### **Statewide College Students Compete in Finals of Inaugural West Virginia Innovation & Business Model Competition**

On Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, hosted by Marshall University inside the Francis Booth Experimental Theater, Millions for Medicine, a Marshall University student-team (Kelly Leonard, Mya Linden, and Sarah Moir) was identified as the grand champion of the inaugural WV Innovation & Business Model Competition (WVIBMC) as presented by the Lewis College of Business and the Center for Entrepreneurship & Business Innovation (iCenter). Millions for Medicine was awarded the top prize of \$5,000, an expenses-paid visit to the Silicon Valley including the Intuit-campus in Mountain View, California, and automatic qualification in the International Business Model Competition held in Provo, UT (May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>).

Creating Greener Solutions (CGS), another Marshall University student-team (Elizabeth Morgan and Brandon Well), was awarded second place and \$3,000, based on the business idea of a device allowing restaurants and convenience stores to form edible/digestible drinking straws. In particular, CGS hopes to significantly reduce the amount of plastic-straw waste that accumulates in the water supply.

Wireless Telemetry (WT), a University of Charleston entry (Sarah Ball), was awarded third place and \$1,000, for the business idea of reducing the number of medical telemetry wires necessary to connect patients and monitors. Wireless telemetry provides several benefits, including mobility and freedom within the hospital campus that will improve patient-experiences and outcomes.

In alphabetical order by institution, the remaining teams were awarded \$500 for use in the further development of their business models: BeeHive (Alexander Sypolt – Univ. of Charleston); Gas -n Go (Carter Shrewsbury – Concord Univ.); Eco-Eatz (Sabrina Gonzalez & Bailey Hanson – Glenville St.); RapidListing (Evan Merial – Glenville St.); Bear UAS (Samuel Bearer – WVU); Alpha Nutrition (Kolby Wolf – WV Wesleyan); and Wesleyan Washers (Tommie Pope & Kennedy Stallworth – WV Wesleyan).

As noted by Host and Master of Ceremonies Bill Bissett (Huntington Chamber of Commerce), a distinguished panel of judges was presented the unenviable task of evaluating these ideas and the business model development of each team. The WVIBMC judging panel included Intuit VP (Education) David Zasada as the keynote speaker and judge, as well as Nick Chapman (Virtual Enterprises International), Michael Green (Mountain State Capital), Jacqueline Khorassani (Marietta College), and Murphy Poindexter (Intuit-consultant) as guest judges.

In the keynote address, Intuit-VP David Zasada recounted his own failure to successfully launch a start-up venture. Through this difficult example, Zasada recounted his unfamiliarity with design thinking that resulted in a solution in need of a problem. This lesson exemplified the need to fall in love with the problem, and not a solution, and to chase customer needs and wants. Zasada challenged students to embrace the customer-centered approach of problem-solving, the inevitable



failures as learning opportunities, and the struggle as a means for eventual success. The Intuit-VP concluded with a personal tale of his interactions with Intuit Chairman of the Board and former CEO Brad Smith (Marshall Univ. – 1986), noting Smith’s accessibility, encouragement, and mentorship to Zasada before joining Intuit.

The championship team (Millions for Medicine), reiterating Zasada’s keynote message, and repeated by other teams, suggested that entrepreneurs should “be focused on the problem and use the process to develop a solution and be open to changing the solution based on the responses you get.” Moreover, many competitors stated that failures provided the insight that will propel their business models forward.

The WVIBMC was organized and hosted by Marshall University (Brad D. Smith Schools of Business, the Lewis College of Business, and the Center for Entrepreneurship & Business Innovation (iCenter)). As part of the 2019 WVIBMC campaign, the iCenter coordinated with six participating institutions to produce at least one automatic qualifier for the Finals Event. For additional Finals Event Recap information, please visit: <https://www.wvinnovates.com/finals-event-recap>



WVIBMC Group Photo: (l to r) Evan Merial (Glenville St.); Samuel Bearinger (WVU); Bailey Hanson (Glenville St.); Kennedy Stallworth (WV Wesleyan); Tommie Pope (WV Wesleyan); Sabrina Gonzalez (Glenville St.); Mya Linden (Marshall); Sarah Ball (Charleston); Sarah Moir (Marshall); Elizabeth Morgan (Marshall); Kelly Leonard (Marshall); Alexander Sypolt (Charleston); Kolby Wolf (WV Wesleyan); Brandon Well (Marshall); and Carter Shrewsbury (Concord).

WVIBMC Grand Champion: Kelly Leonard, Mya Linden, and Sarah Moir (Millions for Medicine – Marshall Univ.) w/ Dean Avi Mukherjee.