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## Mobile Business Cards App Wins Kean Business Plan Competition

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*Kean University business students, Jenny Caruso and Michael Kapotis win Kean University's 2018 Business Plan Competition, with their idea for an electronic business card app, E Cards.*

Two Kean University business students took first place at Kean University's annual Business Plan Competition, which offers \$10,000 in overall prize money to student entrepreneurs who successfully pitch their ideas to a panel of experts, in *Shark Tank* fashion.

The Miron Student Center Little Theatre was crowded with onlookers on Thursday, April 12 as senior Jenny Caruso and junior Michael Kapotis won \$3,000 for their business idea, E Cards, a mobile business card management system.

Mr. Kapotis was inspired to develop the app when, at an industry conference, he ran out of business cards, a critical networking tool for any professional.

"Why don't we have an app on our phone not only to expedite, but to innovate this whole process of the business card?" he thought. From that experience came the creation of a platform to store, exchange and customize business cards from the convenience of a cell phone.

Kean President Dawood Farahi, PhD, offered words of encouragement to the 10 finalists chosen to present their ideas at the competition, out of the more than 120 business plans submitted for consideration.

"People who think, always outsmart those who don't. People who plan, always outperform those who don't," he said. "If you have it, share it, and if you receive it, pay it forward."

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Proposed innovations ranged from BioAttire, a company that makes clothing out of recycled materials, to VaultCash, a data storage and distribution system based on cryptocurrency technologies. The participants included students from Kean's Union campus; two groups each from Kean ocean in Toms River and Wenzhou-Kean University in Wenzhou, China; a solo entrepreneur from New Jersey Institute of Technology; and two duos from local high schools, Vernon Township and Williamstown, who were chosen by DECA leaders.

"The best part of this competition is how it brings communities together. The more people who learn about the Business Plan Competition, the more diverse these teams become, and the more interesting and fun the event will be," said Paul Goncalves, manager of global initiatives for the Kean College of Business and Public Management, who emceed the event.

Coming in second place and winning \$1,500 was Chris Hopkins, a student from Kean's Robert Busch School of Design, who proposed Forte, a mobile app for musicians to collaborate and promote their work. The \$1,000 third-place prize went to NJIT student Dylan Renaud for his online tutoring program, Tudoor. The two proposals from WKU, Green Community Farm and Healthy Blender, rounded out the competition with a tie for fourth place.

Winning first place in the high school category, and \$1,000 in start-up funds, were Williamstown High School students Marcello Oliveto and Dhruv Shah for their proposed Variable Intensity Brake light that would change color based on the level of pressure the driver puts on the brake.

"This experience is great to have under our belts, and will help us move forward," said Shah.

Finalists who did not place in the top five each received a stipend to help them strengthen their business plans.

"Kean's Business Plan Competition is an investment in our most precious commodity – our students," said Jeffrey Toney, PhD, provost and vice president for academic affairs, whose office annually contributes the \$10,000 in award monies.

Kai Wang, PhD, the assistant professor of management who helped organize the event, said the Business Plan Competition is important for students who are learning all aspects of business, including management and marketing, operations, finance and accounting.

"This is a very good chance for them to be creative, to come up with an idea of what they can offer, then to tap into all these different areas to develop a cohesive package that can very well lead to a really successful business," said Dr. Wang.

The competition reflects the mission of the College of Business and Public Management which emphasizes real-world experience that puts theory into practice.