

High School Students Address Social Issues

UNH competition encourages action

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An increased interest in the UNH competition that has entrants tackling some of the key problems plaguing society today has led to the creation of a challenge just for high school students.

The [NH Social Venture Innovation Challenge](#) (SVIC) was launched at UNH in 2013 to urge college students and community members to address social issues through

sustainable, business-orientated solutions. The SVIC high school track is an extension of that successful contest.

In December, five teams from three New Hampshire high schools presented their ideas to a panel of judges, which included two current UNH students, both of whom had previously placed in the college student track of the SVIC.

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After three years of pilot challenges, SVIC organizers are now exploring the idea of a statewide high school competition beginning later this year.

“We are excited to pilot a dedicated high school track for our annual Social Venture Innovation Challenge because we know that current high school students are seeing many of the same issues that contestants in our college and community track see — climate change, the opioid crisis, migrant crisis, mental health crisis and more,” says Fiona Wilson, executive director of the [Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise](#).

First-place winners of the 2018 high school SVIC were Vinayak Kurup, Jenny Yang and Cooper Wolff of Phillips Exeter Academy for BeelInnovative, an idea to revolutionizes the beekeeping industry utilizing machine-learning technology to identify hive health issues and notify beekeepers for timely intervention.

“The contest offered the chance to show our group's ability to come together and use our various skill sets to design a product addressing a significant global issue,” Wolff says. “My greatest takeaway from the experience is that seeking out people with complementary strengths can optimize any creative collaboration. Going forward, I hope that more schools will follow UNH's lead in providing students with opportunities to explore social innovations.”

Second place went to Emanne Khan, Abigail Wilding and Sarah Mullins of The Derryfield School for Growing Hope, a U.S.-based organization that supplies portable milk crate garden boxes to South Sudanese refugees in the Bidi Bidi camp. And Maggie Cissel, Taylor Hare and Andie Ormiston, also of The Derryfield School, placed third with The Education Project, aimed at preventing human trafficking by educating people on the issue.

“Watching the creativity and caliber of the high school teams was proof positive for me that everyone can be a changemaker, no matter their age or background,” Wilson says. “We know that effective solutions come from people who deeply understand the problem they are trying to help solve. It was amazing to see some of these high school students harnessing their own lived experiences and those of their families and friends, in areas such as mental health, to propose innovative and effective solutions.”

Also entering the challenge were Portsmouth High School students Braeden Schafroth-Bach, Adison Scully and Annie Cassell for Helping Our Heroes, an online support

system to help veterans struggling with PTSD or depression receive therapy, and Cameron Bishop, Serina Li, Kevin Shao, Liz Gagnon and Jess Carr of The Derryfield School for One Story, One Change, an online forum where people can share experiences with others without feeling judged.

Learn how you can be a changemaker or apply for a social innovation internship.

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CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE



University of New Hampshire

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