

# UNH Announces Winners of Statewide Social Venture Innovation Challenge

Friday, December 2, 2016



DURHAM, N.H. – A student who proposed a project to improve conditions for shrimp farmers in Bangladesh won the student track of the fourth annual New Hampshire Social Venture Innovation Challenge at the University of New Hampshire.

Designed to be an “innovation accelerator,” participants develop original proposals for sustainable, market-based solutions to some of society’s most pressing social and environmental challenges.

The Final Round of the 2016



THE WINNER OF THE STUDENT TRACK IN THE SOCIAL VENTURE INNOVATION CHALLENGE WAS JIT BANERJEE (CENTER), A MASTER’S STUDENT IN PUBLIC POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE. ALSO PICTURED IS ERIC CARLSON, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AT TIMBERLAND, AND HEATHER HARRIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AT KENNEBUNK SAVINGS. CARLSON AND HARRIS WERE

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Challenge was judged by a group of leading social venture founders, leaders and investors from New

FINAL ROUND JUDGES.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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Hampshire and beyond. There was a track for community members and another for students in any college or university in the state. Eight teams in the community track and nine teams in the student track were chosen to compete in the finals. A new high school track was also piloted this year, which presented to a special panel of judges.

“We were thrilled that 199 individuals representing 78 teams of college students and community members were inspired to design entrepreneurial concepts to tackle major local and global challenges this year,” said Fiona Wilson, executive director of the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise at UNH. “Their innovative ideas spanned energy efficiency, homelessness, oncology care, shrimp farming, waste reduction, renewable energy, anthropogenic nitrogen inputs, sexual assault, drinking water safety, mental health/suicide prevention, broadband access, urban parking, and opportunities for veterans. We know that effective solutions to society’s most insidious problems will increasingly need to come from collaboration -- across private and public sectors and across fields and disciplines – and this challenge not only encourages that type of innovation, but shows what it can accomplish.”

The winner of the student track, Aquinput, proposed an idea to provide shrimp farmers in Bangladesh with better inputs, standardization services and market access. Jit Banerjee is a master’s student in public policy at UNH. He received a cash prize of \$5,000 and a Social Entrepreneur membership and complimentary registration to the annual conference provided by New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility (NHBSR).

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The second and third-place student winners were Biàn and the Great Bay, a team of UNH students looking to prevent nitrogen inputs into the Great Bay by installing urine-diverting toilets and converting the waste into fertilizer, and Project PLAY, a team of students looking to promote active youth by making sports equipment available to underprivileged children. They received prizes of \$3,000 and \$2,000 respectively and a Social Entrepreneur membership and complimentary registration to the annual NHSBR conference.

There was a tie for the winning community team. DreamTech Water Solutions, a team of recent UNH graduates, with a plan to eliminate dangerous compounds from public drinking water, and Full Spectrum Broadband, led by Tom Giancola '15 from Salem will each receive a cash prize of \$7,500, as well as \$4,500 worth of legal services from Pierce Atwood, a leading New England law firm; partner level membership provided by New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility; 12 months of membership in AlphaLoft, an organization dedicated to accelerating innovative start-up and early-stage companies; and one-year subscription to New Hampshire Business Review. Full Spectrum Broadband will also receive 100 hours of consulting donated by PixelMEDIA, a leading New Hampshire-based digital experience agency;

The third-place winner in the community track was uSafeUS, a mobile app that places resources and information related to campus sexual assault directly in the hands of victims and allies. The team received a cash prize of \$2,500 as well as \$4,500 worth of legal services from Pierce Atwood, 12 months of flex membership for co-working space provided by AlphaLoft, partner level membership provided by New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility and a one-year subscription to New Hampshire Business Review. uSafeUS also received an additional \$2,500 donated anonymously.

Major supporters of the challenge include Kennebunk Savings, Pierce Atwood, PixelMEDIA, Timberland, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (whose support, in part, provides prize money for the community track). The challenge is organized and hosted at UNH by the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise (a joint venture of the Peter T. Paul College of Business & Economics and the Carsey School of Public Policy), the Sustainability Institute, NH EPSCoR, UNHInnovation and Net Impact UNH.

To learn more about the winning teams, go to [www.unh.edu/svic](http://www.unh.edu/svic)

The University of New Hampshire is a flagship research university that inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation and world. More than 16,000 students from all 50 states and 71 countries engage with an award-winning faculty in top ranked programs in business, engineering, law, health and human services, liberal arts and the sciences across more than 200 programs of study. UNH's research portfolio includes partnerships with NASA, NOAA, NSF and NIH, receiving more than \$100 million in competitive external funding every year to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

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**University of New Hampshire**

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