

Social Innovation Invites All Disciplines

Motu Biofuels, a team of engineering and public health students, beat out twenty-one other teams in this year's Social Innovation and Venture Competition (SIVC) at Brigham Young University. Motu Biofuels created a way to process coconuts in Tonga into biodiesel. The competition's goal is to focus the energy and ideas of students into sustainable social ventures that improve the world's welfare.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Economic Self-Reliance Center hosted SIVC. This year, the center placed an emphasis on engendering multidisciplinary, university-wide involvement. Students were invited to submit business plans that deal with poverty, education, environment, healthcare, etc. Motu Biofuels represents the multidisciplinary teamwork that the center hopes for in this competition. "We love to see students from every discipline and from other campuses working together with faculty and practitioners to submit viable ventures that create social value, return, or impact," says Todd Manwaring, managing director of the ESR Center. The second place winner, TRIP, created an international youth rehabilitation program, and the third place winner, PASHiON, created a clothing manufacturing business in Palestine.

Unlike many other social innovation competitions, SIVC also encourages students to partner with existing practitioners to build off their experience. "Our hope is that students will partner with practitioners to plan and deliver the innovation. We know that often these exciting



Motu Biofuels with their sponsor, Mark Palmer, Dean Ned Hill of the Marriott School of Management, and Todd Manwaring

ideas can be stifled by internships, first jobs, and other events that students must attend to, which often puts the business plan on hold or results in a complete halt," Manwaring explains.

Also unique to SIVC is the format of award allocation. The center provides an initial award to the three winning plans, which can go toward the venture or be split among the team members. The remaining award money (approximately 75 percent) is disbursed to the ventures only as they meet specific implementation milestones set by the judges and advisors.

Although teams are motivated by the monetary awards, they gain much more in the experience. David Stoker, a Motu Biofuels team member, states the most valuable aspect of the competition was what he learned while designing the business plan: "It was working as a team, combining expertise, making concessions, giving and taking, and being a good team member."

Additionally, students gain invaluable skills and confidence. "There is something inspiring in simply turning your ideas and dreams into a reality," said Stoker. "This experience will give me greater confidence to chase my dreams, to take risks, and to not be afraid of the work required to launch something, both in business and in other aspects of my life."