

New College of Florida Student Entrepreneurs Shine At 26 West Launch []! Event

SARASOTA, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, December 12, 2022 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Three New College of Florida students - and budding entrepreneurs - presented their business pitches before a panel of judges at the inaugural Launch []! event, held at 26 West Center on the State College of Florida (SCF) campus.



Lauren David (fourth year Environmental/Urban Studies), Darwin Tepe (third year Public Policy/Theatre), and Hannah Barker (second year Art/Art History) took part in this academic version of Shark Tank, competing for \$250 in seed money for their new businesses.



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Dwayne Peterson, Executive Director of Career Education

In February of this year, [26 West Center partnered with New College of Florida](#), creating a new experiential learning program. This event was the culmination of a year of study for New College students at the center, a hub for our region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"It was our students who fueled my passion to bring

entrepreneurship education and start-up support to the New College campus," said Executive Director of Career Education Dwayne Peterson. "It turns out our community was also in the process of expanding its support of entrepreneurship through the launch of a community incubator - the 26 West Center. I met the director, Kim Richmond, two years ago, and we spent months dreaming about how we could get New College student entrepreneurs involved in this incubator. This past January, we launched our joint venture, aptly named Launch []! Students who come here are led by industry and entrepreneurship experts. It provided our students with workspace, mentorship, education, resources, and access to investors. In other words, it helped our students work through the physical and mental roller-coaster involved in starting a new business," he said.

"This has been an incredible experience for our students," Peterson added. "We are really fortunate that the higher education institutions in our region believe that we are stronger together than apart. Launch []! is a living, breathing example of what that collaboration can do."

"This inaugural pitch showcase marked a passage for these talented students from the classroom into the real world," said Kim Richmond, Director of SCF's 26 West Entrepreneurship Center. "And that is the real power of experiential learning."



Students Hannah Barker, Lauren David, and Darwin Tepe at the Launch []! Event

Also speaking was Entrepreneurship Instructor and Coach Katie Close, who noted that "Launch []! Is a place where a college education and entrepreneurship meet."

The three students each had seven minutes to sell their pitches to the judges: Davis and her company, Skin by Lauren, a skin-care company devoted to self-care, equitable processes and sustainability; Tepe and his company, Briggantia, a nonprofit social enterprise project. This featured groundbreaking humanities projects, called "behavior beacons," which are designed to encourage behavior change in the people who encounter the art. The first goal was litter, a critical problem here in Sarasota. The company's first art installation will be Sandy the Manatee, a sculpture that contains a waste bin; and Barker and her company, Hannah Joy Barker art. Barker offers graphic design services, developing signature logo pieces for small businesses and nonprofits.

Judges were able to ask questions before rating each of the students on their presentations. In their comments, judges noted the students' passion, strong preparation and overall presentations.

Darwin Tepe took home the \$250 check for his presentation, though all three students were invited to continue their work building their businesses at 26 West Center through the end of the academic year.

"Briggantia's seed money will go toward research. That means the purchase of academic text and also transportation to conduct field studies to further aid in my decision making," Tepe said, adding that, "26 West Center was a great host of the Launch program. Kim Richmond's expertise and vast resource pool coupled with Katie Close's passion and creative problem-solving skill set made for an awesome learning environment. I hope more students partner with Launch and the

26 West Center in the future!"

Investor judges at the event were Mitchell Epstein, Pat Dwechter, Russel Holloway, Lisa Krebs-Knepp, Lynn Morris, Jordan Owens and Jon Stuart.

Photos Courtesy of State College of Florida.

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