

News Release
June 20, 2011



UT Dallas wrapped up another very successful Innovation Opportunity Camp (IOC) this past week; the third consecutive year the camp has been offered. The IOC introduces high school students to innovation and creative thinking, and teaches them the fundamentals of how to be an entrepreneur. Over the past three years, the program has attracted students from public and private high schools from across North Texas, the surrounding region, and even from overseas.

Twenty-five students participated in the 2011 camp, which was held at the School of Management on UTD's campus in Richardson, Texas during June. The camp challenges students to come up with a creative idea, and then develop and present the framework of a business plan for taking the idea to market. The format is interactive, and includes team building exercises, a workshop on presentation skills development, and close interaction with an experienced mentor to help develop each team's business idea. The course curriculum is tailored for the high school level, but is delivered by UTD faculty and professional guest speakers.

Prizes were awarded to the winning teams and individuals in a variety of competitions, including the Business Plan Competition, the Elevator Speech Competition, and a business simulation game that the students competed in. Some of the winning business ideas this year included:

1. A smart refrigerator that tells you when to go to the grocery store and which foods are about to expire
2. A voice activated heads up display for automobiles that assists motorists with navigation and car diagnostics, and
3. A simplified PC and help line targeted at consumers who are just learning how to use a computer

In addition to the team projects and curriculum, the camp also familiarizes students with leading edge technologies through a series of tours of local high-tech companies, including Alcatel-Lucent, Ericsson, and Texas Instruments, and a tour of the UTD Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Labs. The tours provided the students with background on networking technologies, 4G wireless communications, 3-D cinema and other projection technologies, and state-of-the-art research going on at UTD.

"To remain competitive in the future, students must be taught to innovate", said Dr. Joseph Picken, the Executive Director of the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE). "The camp fulfills this mission, and helps the students grow in a variety of ways that will serve them well as they move forward in life."

"It's really all about the students", said Madison Pedigo, the Associate Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programs and the Program Director for the camp. "The IOC camp provides students with a unique opportunity to learn, network, and set themselves apart from their constituents. Both of my daughters have attended the camp, so I believe in the camp both as a UTD faculty member and as a parent."

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Each year, feedback from the students and the parents is very positive. During the camp this year, one student mentioned to her parents that, “I’m not just hearing lectures and information, but I am experiencing a whole new way of thinking about problem solving, creativity and innovation ... this could turn out to be one of those life-altering experiences.”

Marielle Lopez, a student helper and former graduate of the camp commented, “I was a student the first year the IOC camp was offered, and I’ve come back to volunteer for the past two years as my way of giving back everything that the camp did for me. I came in as a shy reserved high school student, and the program forced me to push myself outside of my comfort zone and gain confidence in myself. This experience has been incredible, and I strongly believe in the program. I believe this camp will produce many more successful students, and above all, it is helping shape the future of tomorrow”!

The Camp would not be successful without the support of the 50 + entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and business professionals who volunteer their time to participate in panels, lead discussions, and join the students for roundtable discussions at lunch each day. Nancy Hong, the Assistant Director for the IIE handles the logistical coordination for the camp, including lining up many of the business professionals who help out. “We are grateful to the professionals and student volunteers who work closely with us to make this a success, said Nancy. We are also delighted that many of the high school students elect to return to help us with an advisory board that Madison and I set up to help us continuously improve.”

One of the business professionals who helped with the 2011 camp is Dr. Hubert Zajicek, Senior Director at the North Texas Enterprise Center for Technology (NTEC). Dr. Zajicek commented that, “I believe this program has a profound impact on these high-school students who get to experiment “outside the box”. It’s a wonderful idea for UTD to hold this camp. My children are younger, but I would enroll my kids in this camp in a heartbeat.”

The market “window of opportunity” for participating in the 2011 IOC Camp has closed, but plans for the 2012 camp are already underway. Next year’s camp is planned for 6/11/12 - 6/22/12. Additional information regarding the 2012 camp will be available by January 2012 at <http://innovation.utdallas.edu/>

The Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at UTD sponsors the camp. The IIE was established in April 2006 as a collaborative initiative of the schools of Arts and Humanities, Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, Engineering and Computer Science, Management, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The Institute’s role is that of a facilitator, catalyst and program - *leveraging the power of ideas and technology to create new ventures and add economic, social and cultural value to our community.*