

Tucson Citizen

Online firm wins entrepreneur contest

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SkillIT, an online business that would connect tech-savvy college students with tech-needy community members, took top honors Friday at the CB Richard Ellis/McGuire Entrepreneurship Business Plans Competition at the University of Arizona.

Undergraduate and graduate students at the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship, which is part of the Eller College of Management, work all school year to come up with viable business plans to enter in the competition. The intent is to teach business students how to become entrepreneurs

"We weren't expecting this idea to be so well received," said Eric Wilson of the winning team.

Competition judge Christopher McGuire, vice president and director of the H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation, said all four plans were excellent but judges thought SkillIT "has the best potential for the future."

"However, the plan needs work and we hope they'll maybe check with some of us to see how they could tweak the plan a little," McGuire said after the ceremony.

Other SkillIT team members were Anna Brauer, Tyler Hall and Terence Rosen. The team shares a \$1,000 prize.

Friday's teams advanced from an earlier competition featuring 19 teams, according to Sherry Hoskinson, director of the McGuire Center.

Three other teams might also have advanced but their business plans involved proprietary information that, if disclosed, would ruin their chances for launching their businesses, she said.

The runners-up:

- Cookie Fusion, a cookie shop offering baked-to-order cookies featuring a variety of doughs and ingredients.
- UBike Inc., which would provide university campuses with automated bicycle rental kiosk systems for short-term commuter use.
- Fireguard Industries, which has developed a prototype of a fire nozzle that extinguish fires 40 percent faster using half the water of a normal fire-fighting nozzle.

Bob Morrison, a mentor in the UA's entrepreneurship program and executive director of Desert Angels, a venture capital firm, said he hoped all four ventures presented Friday would be successful.

"In five years, I hope firemen would be riding around on UBikes, eating cookies from Cookie Fusion and calling up SkillIT when they need help with their computers."
