
CSM students present social problem solving projects, earn awards

By DARWIN WEIGEL dweigel@somdnews.com Twitter: @somd_bizeditor

May 13, 2016



STAFF PHOTOs BY DARWIN WEIGEL

The Planting Hope team holds the \$500 check for second place with the Neilom Foundation's Dylan Hazelwood, far left, and Davinder K. Anand.

The College of Southern Maryland held its first Southern Maryland Social Entrepreneurship Challenge presentation May 5 at its La Plata campus. Five student teams competed to earn a \$1,500 first-place prize and \$500 check for second place.

The challenge, which asked teams of students to identify and solve a community problem, was part of the principles of management course (BAD 1210) taught at the school's Leonardtown campus by Mary Beth Klinger. The competition came about as a spinoff of a similar "social engineering" challenge at University of Maryland's Center for Engineering Concepts Development, which is in the Department of

Mechanical Engineering, with funding from the Neilom Foundation.

The foundation, which paid for tuition and books for the students and provided the award money, is named after CECD Director Davinder K. Anand's late son, Dilip Anil "Neil" Anand. According to its website, its "mission is to engage in charitable activities working at the intersection of education and technology to improve the lives of young people" and was founded in 2013 following his sudden death at the age of 48.

The top team was the first to pitch its idea to a group of three judges. The team's Life Planning Curriculum Project centered around incorporating life skills and planning into the school curriculum for poor children and their families.

The team's lead speaker, Paige King of California, Md., said the team plans to pursue the project further even with the competition over. "It was a real honor," she said of participating in the challenge and earning the top prize. "We hope we can continue working with the [St. Mary's] school system to continue helping the community."

The other team members were: Aloysius Bowman of Leonardtown; AnnaBelle Sanders of Lexington Park; Gail Perry of Waldorf; and Pam Toye of Hollywood.

The second-place team tackled child hunger in Southern Maryland through its Planting Hope project in which team members have been establishing the "Seeds of Hope Garden" for the Southern Maryland Food Bank and has started agitating for a student/volunteer run garden plot at CSM's new, still-under-construction Hughesville campus.

"We are continuing the project," said lead speaker Rachel Dorsey of California after the team received its award. "We're going to support the [Southern Maryland] Food Bank to make sure the garden reaches its fullest potential."

The other team members were: Erica Martin of Patuxent River; Melana Krivitsky of Chesapeake Beach; Erik Eaton of California; and Lisa Dixson of Lusby. The team decided to donate the \$500 prize to the food bank garden.

The other three projects included one that focused on the homeless in Charles County and another calling for fully paid college tuition for disadvantaged teens to keep them out of low-wage jobs and off the streets. The last proposed an "oyster buyout" to clean up the bay. That one raised a few eyebrows in the room when the team proposed buying out 65 oyster dredging licenses — similar to the tobacco buyout — and paying waterman for five years to go into oyster farming instead.

The college is hoping to continue the social entrepreneurship challenge next year and will be looking for outside funding sources to replace the one-time grant it received this year.

"We're hoping we can continue doing this every year," said Fileen Abel, the college's vice president for

“We’re hoping we can continue doing this every year,” said Eileen Abel, the college’s vice president for academic affairs and one of the judges. “We’re hoping to find the money to support this in the future.”

Maryland Sen. Thomas “Mac” Middleton (D-Charles County), who graduated 50 years ago this year from Charles County Junior College, which is now CSM, told the audience of students, family and administrators that he couldn’t think of a better time to promote problem solving in the state.

“I’ve been in the legislature for 22 years now and I see more problems in Maryland and Southern Maryland than any other time,” he said. “We need young people working on these problems.”

CSM President Bradley Gottfried took a moment after the presentations before the winners were announced to thank his friend, Davinder Anand, and the various people who put the challenge together, including course instructor Klinger. But then he summed up what the challenge and the resulting awards were about.

“We’re celebrating our students and their creativity,” he said.





Twitter: @somb_bizeditor