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5-4-2020

## Social Networking Concept Named Gillespie Winner

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### Recommended Citation

Connell, Stella, "Social Networking Concept Named Gillespie Winner" (2020). *University of Mississippi News*. 4713.

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## Social Networking Concept Named Gillespie Winner

DaisNotes takes top spot in 16th annual business plan competition awards

MAY 4, 2020 BY STELLA CONNELL



Some of the student participants in the 16th annual Gillespie Business Plan Competition present their proposals virtually to judges April 24. The competition is organized by the UM School of Business Administration and the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Screen shot by Tong Meng

OXFORD, Miss. – An academic social network that allows students to connect with other students in their classes took first place at the recent Gillespie Business Plan Competition at the **University of Mississippi**.

DaisNotes LLC – co-founded by Kyle Herbert, from Metairie, Louisiana, and Nicholas Neilson-Slabach, of Fort Worth, Texas – targets students for note-sharing and social networking for their classes.

“Winning this competition is the culmination of almost a year of hard work for us,” said Neilson-Slabach, a senior in the UM **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College** and CEO of DaisNotes. He graduates this month with a bachelor’s degree in marketing and minors in entrepreneurship and computer science.

“The resources and the office space that comes with the award will make it possible to launch this in August after beta testing this summer.”

The company won \$10,000 and a year of office space at the Innovation Hub at Insight Park, the university’s business incubator. The award is given in two installments on agreed-upon milestones with the company and the **Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship**, or CIE, at the **School of Business Administration**.

“This is only the beginning of DaisNotes, and we are excited to see how we will grow,” said Herbert, an Ole Miss senior and COO of the company. “Sometimes working on a startup feels surreal, and I am so relieved that all of the work we have put in has been worth it so far.

“We couldn’t have made it without the CIE, our mentor Owens Alexander’s support and insights, and our friends and family that have encouraged us.”

Herbert, a managerial finance major with a minor in entrepreneurship, is on track to graduate in December.

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### Campus Briefs

#### Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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#### Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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### Ole Miss In the News

#### Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

DataBrace took second place, winning \$3,000 for a knee brace that tracks the range and motion of the knee, to be used by physicians and physical therapists. It also received the Thomas W. Colbert-Community Bank Innovation award, a \$5,000 contribution to an LLC.

The concept was developed by Tereza Janatova, a senior electrical engineering major from Nova Paka, Czech Republic, and member of the Ole Miss women's tennis team, and Matthew Currie, a senior from St. Louis who is double majoring in mechanical and electrical engineering, and who recently was awarded a Taylor Medal. Both will graduate in May.

"The Gillespie Business Plan competition is an excellent experiential learning experience for these students," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. "It is especially encouraging to see these students pursue their dreams in a virtual setting since the COVID-19 shutdown prevented us from hosting the competition in-person."

Four more startups received \$1,000 each for business development. They are:

- exRcise VR Fitness, a virtual reality fitness studio concept developed by Bryce Williams, a graduate student in exercise science from Ridgeland
- Sparkleboxx, a home-cleaning products subscription service presented by a team of MBA students: Jack Propst, of Nashville, Tennessee; Connor Silk, from Andover, Massachusetts; Lauren Cherup, of Olive Branch; Matt Halderman, from Fredericksburg, Texas, and Jordan Sparkman, of Scooba
- Redgolf, a golf club cleaning concept developed by Carson Zylicz, a sophomore banking and finance major from Sugarland, Texas, who played on his high school's golf team
- Vaught It, a portable storage service for tailgating on football game days developed by Maverick McSparin, from Edwardsville, Illinois, and Kathryn Bickerstaff, of Madison, both seniors majoring in entrepreneurship.

This year the CIE introduced the Lynn and Ron Samuels Student Entrepreneur award, which includes a \$5,000 contribution to an LLC. This year's recipient was Vaught It.

"With so much that is uncertain and difficult, we are so proud our students came out of it with some incredible ideas and great work," said Rich Gentry, CIE co-director. "The students we worked with and encouraged in this competition are the kinds of people we're all depending on to help rebuild the state's economy."

This year, 26 student entrepreneurs or teams entered the competition. The CIE provided virtual workshops for all 26 applicants and requested a video pitch presentation for the semifinals.

The finals featured six participants, presenting eight-minute pitches in a virtual competition, on April 24. The presentations were followed by eight minutes of questions from the judges, who rated the finalists on their written business plans, video presentations and responses during the Q&A sessions.

This year, four judges reviewed the candidates' presentations remotely. The team consisted of Liza Cirlot-Looser, founder and CEO of The Cirlot Agency and chair of the CIE advisory board; Emmet Seibels, founder and former president of SnapWorx LLC and a member of the CIE advisory board; Bill Andrews, former marketing head for Viking Corp., and Henry "Hank" Jones, co-founder of Kopsis Mobile.

"It is great to see our student entrepreneurs, like DaisNotes, go from an idea in the fall to winning Gillespie in the spring with a viable venture, as they worked their way through the Ole Miss entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Clay Dibrell, CIE co-director. "We are proud of their efforts and our other student entrepreneurs during this period of upheaval."

For more information about the Gillespie Business Plan Competition, go to <http://olemisscie.com/programs/gillespie-business-plan/>.

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