

Report on the *Difference*Maker ideachallenge kick-off Event Jan 24 2017

The event 2017 Idea Challenge Kick-Off and Idea hack kick-started with a wide range of participants from Lowell High School, UMass Lowell Manning School of business, Health Sciences, Kennedy School of Science and Francis college of Engineering. Heading towards the year 2017 with this kick-off event we had a good idea as to some of the Ideas and the challenges we would see this year. The main goal of the Fifth Annual DifferenceMaker \$50K Idea Challenge was to engage UMass Lowell students in creative and innovative problem solving around major issues that affect our region and our future.

The event was inaugurated by Chancellor Jacquie Moloney with her motivating and inspiring talk on Idea Challenge and about the DM program. She emphasized on starting to analyse the problems that we face day to day life and bring up some ideas on the problems identified. The speech was followed by a talk from Mr. Joseph C. Hartman, Dean of College of Engineering. He has given us a clear idea on the DM program and about the idea challenge as well.

The event helped a lot to get to know about the DM programs, different activities, the innovations, about participants. The different programs for the Idea challenge are Summer orientation, Winter orientation, Classroom sessions and various meetings. The summer orientation program consisted of 7 faculty members and there were different kind of trainings too. During the winter break also there was orientation conducted and in it the main training was on 'How to make a winning DM Team'. During the summer orientation class room visits were included so that more knowledge could be transferred to many students and other staff. In April there was idea competition where in 30 teams pitched in. In fact it was called as "Pitch-in" program. ☺ The judges were the Alumni from the various departments and fields including

business, social or engineering background. There is an idea club on campus which operates mainly for supporting and assisting students with ideas and those who are trying to implement the ideas. The vision and mission of the idea club is to create and implement a sustainable solution. To ensure that solution for the specific problem or issue would be sustainable in all respects.

The best example for sustainable solution to the hunger problem amongst many students is the venture called **Aramark** in UMass Lowell campus. It was implemented from the year 2010-2011 and it is still running successfully solving many issues among the students. The other DM program ventures are '**NonSpec**' in 2013, '**Support ourStudents**' in 2014, '**Hydraulic Walker**' in 2015, '**eNABLE**' in 2016 etc. '**FreshBeats**' is one of the DM idea implemented and it is the first to market amongst the DM ideas. It goes with food and music a very successful program that has gained much public attention. There are also workshop series conducted to provide a clear knowledge on how the ideas are really getting implemented.

The felicitations was followed by an interactive session with the **eNABLE Lowell**, 2016 Campus-wide DM winner for \$6000 and **invisawear**, 2016 Innovative Technology Solution, \$4500, the successful Idea challengers of last academic year. The team eNABLE Lowell consists of two persons from electrical engineering department and Biological Science have developed a prosthetic arm. It is built in a special way to help children or people in a way that it can help those who have lost fingers, palms or arms. It has gone on to win national success and recognition, raising additional funding and has won the heart of many people who has received the prosthetic arm.

The **invisawear** is an electronic device that is used as a threat alarm. It can be used along with an ornament, daily wear like watches, belts etc. When a causality happens or if someone attacks you this chip can be used at once and it sends a sign or a warning. It has won many national level awards, secured patents and the team has launched a company.

The event had a very good interactive session with the team members of eNABLE Lowell and invisa wear. All the participants who attended could ask questions regarding the challenges faced during the implementation the risks and opportunities associated with this idea development program. The interactive session was followed by a game in which the participants could form different groups. The task assigned consisted of identifying a problem, analysing who are affected by the problem and how it is affected. Different students' teams pitch an innovative solution to a real-world challenge.

There were total 6 teams and each team came up with one or more problems and a solution to the problems. The first team was given the topic '**Consumer products**' to discuss about. The problem they identified is about smoking which is injurious to health. The team put forward the health as well public hazards in smoking and a way to solve it. They suggested the idea of developing a technological device in the smart phone that will detect the user/consumer smoking and will produce certain images in the phone of after effects of smoking. They also came up with another issue that the household devices like refrigerator will stop automatically when not in use and thereby save electricity. They emphasized on people who cannot afford the smart home technologies can actually get a refrigerator which can control the AC and other activities in home. Such a centralised control for all the devices at home would save electricity and will be more efficient smart home technology in the near future.

The second team were discussing on '**Environmental issues**' put forward the issue of '**wastage of water**'. They were focusing on a solution to water wastage which can limit the extra use of water in hostels, housing and public places. Water usage in home or hotels, identifying water energy consumption is affected and finding a solution to it.

The third team discussed about '**Healthcare and Medicine**'. The problem identified was the problems and difficulties faced by a patient. The solution to most of the problems and how to implement them. The

fourth team was given the topic '**Innovation Technology**'. They identified the problems of students using campus shuttle buses. An application can be developed for tracking the time and frequency of these shuttle buses so that accessibility of these buses can be ensured. Moreover students will not miss out buses and can be on time for the classes.

The fifth team was given the topic of '**Software Application**'. This team identified the issue for pedestrians at signals. The wastage of time for crossing the roads by a pedestrian waiting for long time to get the signal for walking. The last team was on '**Other topics**' and the problem identified was regarding acoustics. The team actually put forward the idea of an instrument that can convert any sound to any specific musical instrument. The team had idea on developing such an instrument and they are planning to develop the instrument.

The Idea challenger DM program event thus had a wonderful kick off to this academic year 2017 and it was really motivating to take part in such an event. The Idea challenge teams have gone on to win national success and recognition, raising additional funding, securing patents, and launching companies. It is really helps student to develop the skill of problem solving as well as develop innovative thinking.