

Rosalind Franklin University and the SmartHealth Activator Host Inaugural Biotech Business Plan Competition: Three Women Executives Win Top Awards

by [John Conrad](#) | Jul 30, 2021



Rosalind Franklin University inaugural Biotech Business Plan Competition awardees gathered with event sponsors outside RFU's Innovation and Research Park. Front row, from left: Robin McWherter, CMRT, Co-Founder, Targacell; Tammy Dorsey, MS, Founder & CEO, Prenatal Hope; Amanda Schalk, PhD, Co-Founder & COO, Enzyme by Design. Second row, from left: Michael Rosen, MBA, Managing Director, IRP and Helix 51 incubator; Tom Denison, Founder and Chief Relationship Officer, SmartHealth Catalyzer; Connie Cleary, DPM, RFU Director, Innovation and Industry Relations; Steven Kuemmerle PhD, EVP for Operations, Inspirotec, Inc.; and Ronald Kaplan, PhD, RFU Executive Vice President for Research.

(NORTH CHICAGO, ILLINOIS) — Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, in collaboration with the SmartHealth Activator, a Midwest healthcare ventures accelerator, held the inaugural Chicagoland Biotech Startup Business Plan Competition on July 21. This startup training and competition — which was staged virtually — featured 15 Chicago teams/ventures in categories that included therapeutics, medical devices and diagnostics, digital health care and healthcare services.

The Biotech Business Plan Competition consisted of a four-month training program for Chicagoland startups that paired industry experts as mentors to each new venture and provided coaching on key startup business skills such as elevator pitch, business-plan creation and development, and final longer pitch with audio-visual materials. The event culminated in a competition on July 21 in front of a group of industry and venture capital judges, with the top three companies competing for cash prizes. The Lake County chapter of SCORE — a national nonprofit network of volunteer mentors — also provided assistance in the development, review and critique of the business plan component of the program.

“This program originally enrolled early-stage companies back in March, all with new biomedical innovations that will hopefully benefit patients and healthcare organizations. The goal was to build on our regional startup training activities at our Helix 51 Incubator and the new Innovation and Research Park,” said RFU’s Ronald Kaplan, PhD, executive vice president for research. “It also filled an important gap by assisting these early-stage companies with critical industry mentorship and exposure in our larger Chicagoland bioscience community.”

Each team competed for cash and prizes, with \$10,000 to the first place winner, \$5,000 to the second place winner and \$3,000 to the third place winner. A special award of \$1,000 went to the best elevator pitch. The winning companies were:

- First Place: Prenatal Hope led by CEO Tammy Dorsey, a biomedical engineer, which provides innovative prenatal monitoring devices.
- Second Place: Targacell led by CEO/CSO Catherine Phillips, PhD, which is developing a non-invasive stem cell delivery system to repair damaged hearts. Targacell also won the elevator pitch competition.
- Third Place: Enzyme-by-Design led by Co-Founder and COO Amanda Schalk, PhD, which is developing novel cancer therapy based on engineered enzymes.

“We were thrilled with the high quality of the companies that competed, and the judges, consisting of bioscience industry veterans, were impressed with the preparation, quality and novelty of these companies. We look forward to seeing their further progression and development,” said Tom Denison, founder and CEO of SmartHealth Activator.

In addition to the cash awards, the winning companies all received additional prizes consisting of membership services in RFU’s Helix 51 Incubator, which offers more than

5,500 square feet of lab, office and conference room space for startups, early-stage companies and international companies.

About Rosalind Franklin University

Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is committed to serving the population through the interprofessional education of health and biomedical professionals and the discovery of knowledge dedicated to improving wellness. The university embodies the spirit of inquiry and excellence modeled by its namesake Dr. Rosalind Franklin, whose Photo 51 was crucial to solving the structure of DNA.

Recognized for its research in areas including neuroscience, brain-related diseases, inherited disorders, diabetes, obesity, and gait and balance, RFU encompasses the Chicago Medical School, College of Health Professions, College of Pharmacy, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine, and plans are moving forward for a planned College of Nursing. Learn more at rosalindfranklin.edu.

About SmartHealth Activator

SmartHealth Activator is a nonprofit inspiring and educating bioentrepreneurs in the Midwest. Its sister company, SmartHealth Catalyzer, accelerates the commercialization of therapeutics, diagnostics and medical devices being developed at Midwest universities and research hospitals that diagnose, prevent and treat life threatening diseases. Learn more at smarthealthcatalyzer.com.