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The 9th Annual SBU- Hosted WolfieTank

by Muskan Gupta, MS '24

On November 17th, Stony Brook University hosted WolfieTank. It is a short and minimized version of SharkTank in which Stony Brook students present their projects/business ideas and get funding from people to turn their dream into reality.

Luckily, I got a chance to attend this amazing event where I had an opportunity to speak with multiple people and hear some awesome yet different project ideas to make the world better.

There were six team presentations in total, and every presentation forced me to think about how there continue to be many directions that have yet to be taken within the scope of improvement for humans and mankind.

One of the projects that caught my eye and attention the most was the interesting and very attractive "Improv Playing Cards". In collaboration with Celeste video games, Matthew Miller, student in the MBA program in the College of Business, and alumna Eva Paruch presented their self-owned card company that produces character-based cards. The team won first place and were awarded \$2500.

I was given the opportunity to interview the founder and director of WolfieTank, David Ecker, Adjunct Faculty in the College of Business and technology solutions and engagement specialist/innovator in the Division of Information Technology.

MG: What kind of work do you do and what motivates you everyday to go to your work and give your best?

David: I want to make a difference in students' lives. I have been an entrepreneur for 20 or more years and I love the passion that you get in making the difference. It is one of the most exciting things that we can do. Making a difference helps students to think out of the box, do hands-on learning and develop their own skills. If you can develop your skills, you are going to be better in your careers, and do great things.

MG: How can students reach out to you for mentoring and guidance for their careers or for business ideas?

David: You can reach out to me on email david.ecker@stonybrook.edu. I am in the division of information technology and I have adjunct lecturer appointments in the College of Business. We try to promote

entrepreneurship in all the different ways we can do and that's what WolfieTank was all about. It promotes entrepreneurship and encourages students to develop ideas. In IT, I also work on AI, Machine Learning and all kinds of cutting-edge technology.

MG: Can you also share some highlights on what industries have you explored and in which areas you have worked upon?

David: I did everything. I started an Entrepreneurial business website when websites don't exist. Then I did some in Computer Consulting dealing with mainframe computers that are now obsolete, dealing with startups, some in networking and then we did a Lobster's Business in which we were shipping lobsters all around the country, coffee business, I am now an author and we now retail business where we buy and sell things. Any kind of business you can think of, we have got into it and we have done it.

MG: What was the motivation factor to get into all these completely unrelated fields?

David: So, I have been an IT guy forever so that's where all has started. I have good technical know-how in IT and I am very good at explaining IT. When we started the lobster business, we were in Maine, where we talked to one fisherman who wanted to ship lobsters throughout the country. That excited us. I knew the technical part and my wife was good at logistics, so the next thing we were doing was stepping into Lobster's business. My wife and I are very good at seeing opportunities in the market and when you can see an opportunity, you try to capitalize it and see if you can help people and make a profit around it.

MG: Why did you choose to come to SBU?

David: I am an Alum and got my Bachelor's in Computer Science degree from here, then I worked in the city for a year and got an opportunity to come back and what drives me is the opportunity to help students and when I got this, I decided that I don't want to let it go. I want to do that for the rest of my career and IT is the catalyst for doing that. It allows me to use my technical skills to help other students in all the different ways and now I help staff and faculty. Anybody who needs help, I can make a difference and it makes me feel good. Everyday, when I go home, I feel like I really contributed today and I love that.

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Professor of the Month

Patricia Maurides

Department of Art, Adjunct Lecturer



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Patricia Maurides is a visual artist and educator making photographic images that explore themes of perception and identity. Her professional background is multidisciplinary rooted in both the biological sciences and the fine arts. She is frequently a performer in her image tableaus, using her own scientific imaging, and the natural environment as content and inspiration for her image compositions.

Maurides recently moved to Long Island (2016) and currently teaches photography and interdisciplinary studios bridging the visual arts and natural sciences in the Department of Art at Stony Brook University. From 2000-2016, she designed and taught photography and interdisciplinary art and science studio courses at Carnegie Mellon University.

Her current photographic investigations explore perception and seeing through her own eyes and extends to using photography as a voice for others who have different ways of seeing and being in the world. She recently completed the project Seeing Happiness with the Explorers Program of the East End Special Players – an arts initiative for adults with diverse abilities.

For her Sight series, Maurides uses her own optic nerve scan as a type of scaffolding to collect, hold, and layer imagery of her new surroundings and seeing challenges. This series explores these shifting visions, both biological and sense of place. Maurides sees art and science as twin tools for opening up the world and making sense of very small things. She hopes to foster opportunities for her students, her community and herself to work creatively across art and science disciplinary cultures.

Maurides received grants from NYFA/NYSCA, The Nature Conservancy - The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, and the Louisiana Division of the Arts.

Maurides has an MFA in Art from Carnegie Mellon and a BS in Biological Sciences from the University of South Carolina. She currently lives in Long Island with her husband, daughter, and happy dog.

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