

**\$117,000 Distributed to Economic Fuel Winners  
by Courtney Hunt-Munther, The Eureka Reporter  
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A total of \$117,000 was distributed to eight teams of entrepreneurs last Thursday during the awards ceremony of the 2007 Economic Fuel student business challenge. The money will be used as seed capital for businesses proposed by each team.

Of the 32 plans submitted to the competition this year, eight were selected as finalists, and after formal presentations last week, the panel of six judges ranked the teams' performances.

Judges evaluated the plans based on a number of criteria, including the overall viability of the idea, the team's potential to successfully start and grow the business and the quality of the written business plan.

The business plan evaluations centered on whether the team effectively defined the industry, target market and existing competition, as well as included a marketing plan, the business's social impact, financial assumptions and a spending plan for the \$25,000 prize.

Additionally, formal presentations were judged on the content and quality of the teams' speeches, with an emphasis on whether team members effectively "sold" the business idea and responded appropriately to any questions posed.

The four top teams were awarded \$25,000, including Shail Pec-Crouse and Sarah Brunner of Wild Chick Farm, Kalindi Rogers and Erin Slattery of Agogo, Jason Buck and Jamie Ford of TrenchScan and Inga Denney and Jacob Hansen of Innovative Medical Workshops.

Jim Rose, who proposed California Native American Petroleum, won \$10,000 as first runner-up, followed by David Stone and Dan Hunter of North Coast Solar, who won \$5,000 as second runner-up.

Two \$1,000 honorable mention prizes were awarded to Gregory and Samantha Hufford of Redwood Outfitters and to Patrick Wiley and Brandon Hemenway of AlgaRhythms. Both teams earning honorable mention will be eligible to submit business plans in next year's competition.

In opening comments preceding the announcement of the winners, Humboldt State University President Rollin Richmond commented on the importance of building the local economy through the entrepreneurial pursuits of students in Humboldt County.

"This type of long-term thinking is an important model both for California and for the United States," Richmond said.

Speaking directly to competition finalists, he added, "Regardless of whether you win tonight, you are already a winner ... for what you are giving back to the community."

College of the Redwoods professor Chris Gaines and HSU professor Nancy Vizenor also spoke during the awards ceremony, directing praise and advice toward the entrepreneurs.

Vizenor believes entering Economic Fuel gives area entrepreneurs incentive to act on a business idea they may have spent years thinking about.

"It encourages them to pursue this passion, this dream," she said.

Added Gaines, speaking directly to the finalists, "Your passion and your commitment to this event (are) inspirational."

Sponsored by The Eureka Reporter, Economic Fuel: the Humboldt County Student Business Challenge is designed to promote economic growth on the North Coast through the support of local entrepreneurs.