

Tulane innovators pitch creative medical solutions at Open MIC Night debut

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At the Open MIC Night Challenge on March 16, PhD candidate in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Melika Farzam pitches her durable synthetic polymer based joint meniscus, Articular Solutions, which is less invasive compared to traditional knee replacements and can provide a long-term solution to meniscal tears. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

The Tulane University Innovation Institute, the Dean's Office at the Tulane School of Medicine and the Deming Department of Medicine partnered for the inaugural "Open MIC (Medical Innovation Challenge) Night" on March 16 to encourage students and

faculty to innovate and think of creative solutions to complex medical and healthcare problems. A fun evening and packed house at the newly opened Chapter IV restaurant hosted students, faculty and staff who commanded the microphone for 3 minutes each to convey their medical solution. This was a unique opportunity for Tulane and the broader community to embrace early-stage technology ideas and innovation while fostering impactful connections.

The Open MIC Night pitch competition connected Tulane innovators to local investors and experts with important resources designed to inspire growth and strong relationships.

Dr. Nassir Marrouche, director of the TRIAD Center and professor of medicine at the School of Medicine, played a critical role in the development of the program as well as identifying investors and experts to be a part of the institute's network of judges and mentors. These judges will dedicate their time, resources and expertise to the Round 1 winners and help them to prepare for Round 2. The best ideas from Round 1 advance to Round 2 for "de-risking" and commercialization with expert advice and mentorship. In early May, the six winners of the Open MIC Night series will present a formal pitch to judges for an opportunity to win \$2,000 to develop a phase 1 proof of concept.

"I'm ecstatic at how the community came together to support innovative ideas. The energy and enthusiasm of presenters and participants are the building blocks of our entrepreneur ecosystem," said Kimberly Gramm, David and Marion Mussafer Chief Innovation and Entrepreneurship Officer at the Tulane Innovation Institute. "I am looking forward to the journey in supporting our innovators like those we experienced at Open MIC Night, truly inspiring!"

Faculty and students exhibited passion in creating novelty solutions such as therapeutics, medical devices, novelty processes, process optimizations, apps and software, and other creative solutions.

"At our first open MIC night event I was very impressed with the quality of startup ideas that are being developed at Tulane! Open MIC Night is becoming a platform to unveil exceptional talents and promising entrepreneurial minds at our university," Marrouche said.

Open MIC Night provides an opportunity for immediate feedback as our talented Tulanians attempt to accelerate the de-risking and develop transformative innovations to make a difference in the lives of others.

“Cross-disciplinary conversations catalyze the next generation of innovative medical treatments, tests and diagnostics. Open MIC Night is accelerating those conversations, and we look forward to the day the outcomes are implemented by Tulane Doctors to benefit the people of New Orleans,” said James Zanewicz, chief business officer for the Tulane School of Medicine and Tulane National Primate Research Center.

The competition is open to medical and PhD students, postdocs/residents/fellows, and any Tulane student, faculty, and staff with ideas for innovative medical solutions. For more information about future Open MIC Night sessions, contact innovation@tulane.edu.





Kimberly Gramm, David and Marion Mussafer Chief Innovation and Entrepreneurship Officer at the Tulane Innovation Institute listens as Dr. Nassir Marrouche, director of the TRIAD Center and professor of medicine at the School of Medicine, speaks during Open MIC Night. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

Gramm (front) joins the winners of Round 2 of the Open MIC Night held on March 16: (from left) Talia Daneshrad, a Management, Marketing and Management major at the A.B. Freeman School of Business; Kalen Hall, a PhD student in Biomedical Sciences at the School of Medicine; Leo Williams, PhD candidate in the BioInnovation laboratories of Zachary F. Pursell, PhD; Dr. Nassir Marrouche, Director of TRIAD Center and professor of medicine; Ryan Reynolds, a Finance major at the Freeman School; Alex Suh, Tulane medical student; Kemdi Okafor, Tulane medical and master's student; Rishawn Dindial, Tulane medical and MBA student; and Ramesess Akamefula, Tulane medical and MBA student. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)