

NewDay Boosts Student Business

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Drop the Chalk, a web-based software solution to help teachers become better classroom instructors, won \$20,000 in startup capital in Tulane's first NewDay Challenge, a social venture competition for student teams.



Celebrating the NewDay Challenge award are, from left, Dana Day of the NewDay Foundation; Drop the Chalk team members Jen Schnidman, Jonathan Rovick and Kurt Gerwitz; and Stephanie Barksdale, manager of Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives at Tulane. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

A panel of local judges selected Drop the Chalk over environmental remediation venture Nanofex and disaster evacuation assistance nonprofit Evacuteer.org. The finalists presented their plans to an audience of students and social entrepreneurs on Friday (April 16) at the A. B. Freeman School of Business.

The NewDay Challenge is the culmination of a yearlong effort to raise awareness within the Tulane community about social entrepreneurship.

The process has included business planning workshops, sales pitch training sessions and a speakers' series organized by Stephanie Barksdale, manager of [Social](#)

[Entrepreneurship Initiatives](#) at Tulane. NewDay is just for ventures led by principals that include Tulane students.

Barksdale is particularly happy to see how these ventures evolved from creative ideas dreamed up in the beginning of the school year to full-fledged business plans.

"NewDay started last fall with our PitchNOLA event where many of the finalists first presented their ideas to the Tulane community," Barksdale says. "I am so proud of Tulane's community partnerships and the passion and commitment of students to help develop innovative solutions that will directly impact the New Orleans community."

Drop the Chalk is a web-based software application that helps great teachers get even better, says founder Jennifer Schnidman, a computer scientist and software developer who spent the past three years in the classroom. The Drop the Chalk team includes Tulane MBA students Jonathan Rovick and Kurt Gerwitz, as well as Loyola University undergraduate Stephen Corburn.

The software enables teachers to store all of their student-achievement data and make informed decisions in the classroom. Schnidman says more than 100 teachers in New Orleans use Drop the Chalk, and many describe it as "a must for lesson planning."