

## **MBA Grads Help Rebirth of Small Businesses**

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Chonchol Gupta and Xavier Cabo are 2010 MBA graduates of Tulane who are heating up the world of small business in a big way. Gupta and Cabo created Rebirth Financial, a small business online lending platform that is one of four companies with associates who are recent Tulane graduates or current students that were chosen to be part of the Idea Village Entrepreneur Challenge for 2011.



Five Tulane-affiliated innovators whose companies won the Idea Village Entrepreneurship Challenge are, left to right, Xavier Cabo, Chonchol Gupta, Brandon Iglesias, Larry Spegele and Matthew Miller. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano.)

Young companies are chosen through the competitive challenge to partner with the nonprofit [Idea Village](#) for a six-month entrepreneur development program.

Though Rebirth Financial has existed for only a year, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco labeled the firm is “an idea to change the U.S. finance system.”

Gupta first got the idea for Rebirth Financial when he discovered a lack of small business banking in New Orleans. Because of the dearth of capital available for small businesses, “people were getting loans at too high of a price, or not at all,” he says.

Rebirth Financial is “E-Trade for loans,” says Gupta. The concept is simple: if a borrower needs a loan, lenders — anyone from individuals to financial institutions — can log on and compete to fill the loan by bidding down the interest rate. After acquiring the loan, the borrower pays it back at a fixed monthly payment.

A few weeks after its official launch, [Rebirth Financial](#) funded its first project. Mark Hammond, the CEO of Hammond's Transportation in New Orleans, used Rebirth to secure a \$20,000 loan to buy two-way radios for his school buses.

According to Gupta, a venture capital firm has already given Rebirth Financial a multi-million dollar valuation, and Rebirth plans to expand nationally.

Three other companies represented by people affiliated with Tulane also are part of the [2011 Entrepreneur Challenge](#) companies — The Durationator, Refresh Environmental and EMOPP.

Brandon Iglesias and Larry Spegele, both scheduled to graduate in May from the A. B. Freeman School of Business, developed biofuels startup [Refresh Environmental](#). Iglesias also helped established [EMOPP](#), “the world's first rapidly deployable electromagnetic oil pipe plugger.”

[The Durationator](#) is a legal software tool created at Tulane Law School by professor Elizabeth Townsend-Gard and Matt Miller, a 2009 law graduate.

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