

Changemaker Institute Summit showcases social innovators

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The Changemaker Institute's Annual Summit celebrated student-led efforts in social innovation at Tulane University by awarding nearly \$50,000 in funding to aspiring entrepreneurs.

The Victor C. Alvarez Spark Innovation Award, which supports prototyping venture ideas, provided \$13,000 to seven ventures. The NewDay Award provided \$35,000 in seed funding.

The summit provided a capstone celebration for graduates of the Tulane Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching's [Changemaker Institute](#), an intensive seven-week university incubator program.

Six of this year's nine Changemaker Institute venture teams made pitch presentations, with 18 students representing graduates and undergraduates from almost every school within the university. One team of Loyola undergraduates joined the Changemaker Institute for the first time this year.

"We are in the business of making change," said Luke Livaudias, a Loyola student who presented the Rational Vote Project, a venture that has developed an algorithm to match voter interests with local political candidates in an effort to increase local election awareness and political participation.

Changemaker Institute-incubated ventures ranged from a rapid multiple virus diagnostic tool developed by doctoral students in biomedical engineering, to a nonprofit textbook exchange being prototyped by undergraduates studying marketing. The teams made three-minute pitches and received audience ideas and questions through a live interactive feedback system.

Jennifer McNulty, senior program coordinator at the [Center for Engaged Learning](#)

[and Teaching](#) (CELT), said: “Our goal is not solely venture-creation. We want students to master transferable entrepreneurial skills, to build empathy and to grapple with the sometimes tense relationship between social justice and utilizing elements of the business toolkit to create positive social change. The Changemaker Institute challenges students to question their assumptions, and if they find that their idea would be better executed within an existing organization, we consider that learning a success.”

Winners of the Victor C. Alvarez Spark Innovation Award were: The Cookbook Project, Birthmark Doulas, Fund 17, ImpACT, Girls" Digital Storytelling Camp, MicroPAD Solutions, and Textbooks Change. Recipients of the NewDay award were: The Cookbook Project, Girls" Digital Storytelling Camp, Fund 17, and Micro PAD Solutions.



Jennifer McNulty, above, right, senior program coordinator for social innovation at the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching, discusses this year's class of participants with Changemaker Institute fellows Hannah Horowitz, left, and Elias Garcia, center, by her side. (Photos by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)



Tulane students Lauren Astrachan and Ryan Winemiller, above, present their venture, Textbooks Change. The venture will be prototyped this summer with the aid of a Victor C. Alvarez Spark Innovation Award.



Luke Livaudais, a student at Loyola University who participated in the Changemaker Institute, presents his venture, the Rational Vote Project.