SP.723: D-Lab III: Dissemination: Implementing Innovations for the Common Good
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Lecture Notes

Session 3, 2/13/07

- Class Introductions

- Guest speaker: Alison Hynd from the IDEAS competition:
    - Innovation and entrepreneurship competition
    - Projects must be innovative, feasible, and genuinely serve the needs of an underserved community
    - Projects should be done in partnership with a community, with two-way feedback, rather than just coming up with a one-way project that is imposed on a community
        - IDEAS Competition can help with creating these community connections
    - You can apply for a development grant: several hundred dollars to help move a project along toward the competition (this isn't for implementation – that's what the final award is for)
    - Final application: ten-page description of project, including a proposed budget
    - If you win a financial award, you have a year in which to spend those funds for your project
        - All of the funds can only be used for project work – you don't get to keep any of it directly
    - A few weeks after the competition judging, the winning teams all go on a two-day residential retreat for planning and training.
    - There's a dinner this week: you should all go and pitch your project or offer yourself "for hire" to a team, so that everybody can hear about what you're planning to do
    - Related pitch: MIT also has a Public Service Center Fellowship Program, which you could also apply for
    - More and more teams tend to join as the competition goes on. In the final stage of the competition there are usually 20-40 teams competing
    - $7,500 is available for the top prize. There are also several other awards available for other prize amounts.
    - Project profiles for pre-existing teams are also available if you want to join one.
    - The IDEAS Competition can only be entered by MIT students
    - If you find a pre-existing team project idea that appeals to you, you can think about altering it in someway, such as expanding it to another location.
    - The projects don't have to be non-profit. If the best way to move the project forward is to be a for-profit company, that's ok, as long as you can

demonstrate that you're serving the needs of an underserved community, and that the for-profit structure works best for your plan.

- What competitions are people planning to submit to?
  - One student is definitely applying to both IDEAS and 100K
  - Another student is particularly planning to submit to Ignite (a Massachusetts state clean energy competition)

- Pitches (The whole class is going to practice their project pitch again, more formalized this time. Everybody is limited to no more than one minute):
  - Ali, personal pitch: my number one passion is helping others, I've done research in multiple sclerosis,, and I'm experienced in mechanical engineering, biology, and biological engineering, among other topics. I'm most interested in biomedical projects, and if I find a project that I really like then I'll be very hard working and do anything necessary.
  - Abraham – energy aspect, energy experience, energy management firm over the summer, I'm very passionate about this and I'd be very eager to be a team player for such a project
  - Chris: Biogas energy structural technologies. My idea revolves around developing an energy solution for communities in Latin America. Currently they have to burn wood or crop wastes, which leads to pollution and deforestation. I'd like to develop a structure that uses bio-energy for fuel.
  - Xavier – motivation and focused direction, passion for implementation, fastidious attention to detail, affinity for projects with a lasting effect on communities in Latin America, particularly Nicaragua, where I've lived for 5 years
  - Angela – TB challenge – developing a team that's sensitive to the reasons patients fail to take their TB drugs. We're prepared to offer incentives for them to take their drugs. We're developing biologists, economists, public health experience. We're looking for chemists and materials scientists. Anybody else is also welcome.
  - Zehra – project focusing on the earthquake that happened in Northern Pakistan, trying to develop sustainable shelter designs. Household services for lighting and heating. Poverty alleviation and outreach. Focus on one village in particular that we already have contact with. Looking for anyone with an engineering, architecture, urban planning, or economics background
  - Tamira – looking for a project that's being developed in partnership with a community and in response to a particular need. Extensive experience with travel in developing countries. Help communities take their development process into their own hands
  - Tess – technical projects, robotics, neuroscience. French, Spanish, and Chinese. Biogas or solar power, mobility, and women's education and sexual education

- o Jessica – work this IAP in Zambia, planned a comprehensive water purification project. Passionate about designing and implementing projects. healthcare, education, alternative technology
  - o Daniel – building and shop experience. Particularly interested in projects involving energy

- Tips for giving a good pitch
  - o Be sure to smile while speaking
  - o Interpersonal details (such as being good at making people laugh) can be useful in getting yourself hired, even if they might seem silly
  - o Really long project titles can get cumbersome. If they need to be lengthy, that's ok, but use it as a description, rather than trying to use it like a catchy title when that's not what it is.
  - o Try to show that you know something about the particular location and technology in question, and that you know about what work has already been done in the past on this subject.
  - o Be specific where possible
  - o Try to stand out by saying something that other people will remember and be interested in
  - o Show that you have interpersonal skills
  - o Foreign language skills are also useful
  - o You need to develop your idea into something practical and specific, and spend time building on it
  - o Financial skills and fundraising skills are really useful to advertise, because every team needs somebody with financial skills
  - o Personal connections with a community or a field are very useful

- Guest speaker: Katya Wald, Program Manager at the Deshpande Center for Technological Innovation
  - o Our Center focuses on innovating MIT technologies
  - o We have sort of a commercial bent
  - o We give grants to faculty members for technologies that we think have good potential for the next few years
  - o We give 50 to 250 thousand dollar grants.
  - o The grants are faculty sponsored, but there are lots of projects where students are doing most of the work, and faculty are just acting as sponsors
  - o We fund research projects, not business plans. We fill that gap before something is ready to become a business, including money for market research, research to reduce the technical and financial risk, etc.
  - o We host a conference called IdeaStream every year to sponsor connections, feedback, and communication about projects. People present their potential projects there.
  - o The only real requirement for a project is that you be working on it here at MIT.

- The audience is invitation only, and the audience gives feedback on all of the projects, which can help you better flesh out the ideas behind your project
- There's networking time afterwards
- We're looking for projects that will have a great societal impact.

- Next time in class we'll finalize our project groups so you should all be thinking seriously about that.

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