

BIG IDEAS CHALLENGE

Student New Venture Competition

November 16, 2023



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
CENTER FOR INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BIG IDEAS CHALLENGE

Welcome

Introduction: Dr. Shane Bowyer

Director of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Associate Professor of Management

Emcee: Father-Son Duo Jake Lesley & Gary Lesley

Finalist Presentations

The A.R.N.O.L.D. Project: Jeffrey Schetnan

Miracle: Xavier Thomas

Credit Cruncher: Jacob Price

Lloyd Companies – Craig Lloyd

Finalist Presentations

GigBridges: Kaleb Betwos & Makda Asmelash

Evoli: Melan Shifa

FLOCK: Huzaifa Muhammad

People's Choice Voting

PollEv.com/bic

Fireside Chat

Awards



Big Ideas Challenge Finalists

The A.R.N.O.L.D. Project

Litter not only ruins the appearance of the landscape it resides in, it also causes significant harm to the natural environment we depend on and accumulates more rapidly than it can be collected. The A.R.N.O.L.D. (Aerial Restoration of Nature and Open Land with Drones) Project aims to automate the litter collection and recycling process through the use of drones with computer vision capabilities for a faster, safer, and more efficient process.



Jeffrey Schetnan: MIS; Junior

Miracle

Miracle is a social network that provides creatives and entrepreneurs opportunities (connections, lessons, bookings and publicity) to build a sustainable career. Each user has a personalized experience to address gaps or barriers that hinder their potential. Miracle is designed to never be deleted; our services assist all creatives no matter the timeline.



Xavier Thomas: Management; Senior

Credit Cruncher

Credit Cruncher is a credit projection phone app that will graph future credit growth and give tips on how to maximize credit growth and improve graph accuracy. This app can help the user determine when they will have access to the best interest rates, potentially saving them thousands of dollars. This app can also be used to determine if fraudulent or incorrect activity has taken place with the user's credit accounts.



Jacob Price: Electrical and Computer Engineering; Graduate Student

GigBridges

GigBridges is a dynamic student-centric platform that connects diverse students with a wide range of gigs and services, fostering community support, innovation, and economic empowerment.



Kaleb Betwos: Finance; Senior

Barok Feteheadin Hamza: Computer Information Technology; Sophomore

Makda Asmelash: Management & MIS; Junior



Evoli

Evoli is every student's dream dashboard: hosting a harmonious blend of academics, work, career development, projects, and cherished daily habits like hitting the gym, dynamic to-do lists and more. Harnessing the power of cutting-edge AI, it fine-tunes, and crafts each day's schedule based on task complexities, recovery periods, and individual tastes, saving students invaluable hours and alleviating stress. As the core feature, the personalized AI assistant continually evolves with the user assistant with many uses from guiding through a class module for an exam, jotting a workout plan or even planning a busy day ahead, ensuring a tailored experience that navigates the intricacies of college life, all under one roof.



Melan Shifa: Computer Science; Junior

FLOCK

FLOCK is a smart lock that harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to provide secure and convenient access to homes using facial recognition. It is not only a modern security solution but also a boon for the elderly and disabled, ensuring that everyone can enjoy a safer and more convenient way to access their homes.



Muhammad Huzafa: Computer Information Technology; Junior



Jake Lesley

Jake Lesley is a dynamic entrepreneur with a specialization in brand creation, internet marketing and sales. His journey into the realm of entrepreneurship began back in 2005 in the Gage Dorms at Minnesota State Mankato, where he earned a degree in marketing and began his MBA. During his time at Minnesota State Mankato, Jake was not only focused on business development but also stayed active on and off the football field with the Mavericks and Minnesota Vikings.

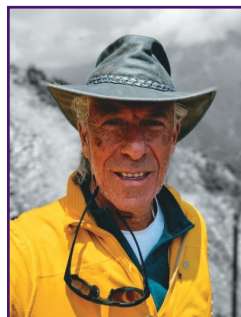


Jake's entrepreneurial journey has been marked by a series of fun and successful ventures primarily around the agricultural, automotive and power-sport industries. As a strategic thinker, he has launched and scaled multiple dealerships, e-commerce sites and other brands by leveraging his expertise in internet marketing to drive traffic, engage customers, and generate revenue. With an unwavering commitment to staying ahead of industry trends, Jake remains at the forefront of internet marketing strategies and recently developed a 50 acre Agricultural and Recreational facility called The Toy House where they specialize in testing, educating and selling equipment and products online. Beyond his professional pursuits, Jake has a hobby farm and 3 kids under three whom continue to teach plenty of patience and nonverbal skills.

He actively supports initiatives aimed at empowering aspiring entrepreneurs and helping other business owners thrive in the digital age and is always looking for the next "big idea."

Gary Lesley

Minnesotan Gary Mark Lesley is a former international business founder/owner, mentor, aviator, endurance athlete and the author of YES: a Parable of Possibility (Amazon Books). Active with his alma mater Minnesota State Mankato, you may find him working on his next project along the shores of Lake Chapala in Mexico or in Khumjung Village near the base of Mt. Everest in Nepal. Known for his Changes-Choices-Principles mantra, Gary's latest endeavors include his new foundation: Growingdome in the Clouds, dedicated to raising funds for a solar, geodesic growingdome for the Sir Edmund Hillary School in the Himalaya.



Big Ideas Challenge Judges

David P. Krause

Pioneer Bank

David Krause is the CEO and Chairman of Pioneer Bank, an \$800 million community bank with seven locations in Southern Minnesota. He is an experienced residential mortgage, business and ag banker and has successfully negotiated three bank merger/acquisitions and opened two de novo branches. His industry leadership includes serving as Chair of the Minnesota Bankers Association (MBA) in 2019-2020 and serving on the American Bankers Association's Community Bankers Council and the MBA's Government Relations Council. A passionate advocate for community and economic development, he is the immediate Past Chair of GreenSeam and the Chair of Greater Mankato Growth.



Pioneer Bank has been named a Top 200 Workplace for 2023 by the Star Tribune, received the 2023 All-Around Supporter of the Year award from the Greater Mankato Area United Way, and is the newest member of the Greater Mankato Growth Business Hall of Fame.

Mark Bietz

Fun.com

Mark Bietz is Chief Marketing Officer at Fun.com / HalloweenCostumes.com based in North Mankato, MN. They are the largest online Halloween retailer in the world. Mark is also an investor and advisor to other D2C and tech companies throughout the country. He is a member of the College of Business Advisory Council at Minnesota State Mankato and 2007 graduate of the program.



Big Ideas Challenge Judges

Gene Sanguma

Ties Lounge & Rooftop

Gene Sanguma graduated with his bachelor's degree in Sport Management & Marketing from Minnesota State University, Mankato in 2018. From then on he started a marketing & promotional company called "Mpls Ties". The goal was to tie the community together through not exclusive events but inclusive events. Him and his two partners promoted for various bars & nightclubs in Minneapolis and ended up building a large following on social media. This inspired them to open up their own lounge and rooftop space in downtown called Ties Lounge & Rooftop in 2021 which made Gene the youngest bar owner and liquor license recipient in the city. Gene is now the Creative Director and Head of Marketing of Ties.



Mike Hahn

Small Business Development Center

Mike works in small business development and downtown revitalization and considers himself a builder of entrepreneurs and communities. He is a passionate advocate for downtown areas, believing that when the center of a community is healthy and strong, it radiates vitality to the rest of the community. Mike has been happily married to his wife Bonnie since 1987, and they have three adult children – one son and two daughters. Although he is a native Iowan, having grown up in the northern part of the state, Mike is a lifelong fan of all Minnesota professional sports. He enjoys the four seasons of the north, including the quiet and peacefulness of winter. Mike specializes in turnaround strategies, market research, and finance. He particularly enjoys explaining financial and marketing data to his clients and watching the "light bulbs" go off as they gain new insights. Mike has been the Regional Director of the South Central Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) hosted by Minnesota State University, Mankato, since 2017. He is a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa.



Big Ideas Challenge Judges

Susan Michaletz

PoppedCorn, LLC

Susan Michaletz is a small business owner with a wide variety of experience. After graduating from Minnesota State University, Mankato with degrees in Accounting and Finance, Sue became a CPA while working at Arthur Andersen & Co. With her experience as a CPA Sue became CFO for a Muni Bond firm, a family real estate development company, then President of a national property management and development Company. During this time, Sue started Range Systems in 1999 which she sold several years later.



Sue is currently President of PoppedCorn, a retail store in Minnetonka with 2 locations within US Bank Stadium. Sue started PoppedCorn, LLC in Oct 2014 in Minnetonka with the idea to provide outstanding gourmet popcorn and gifts. Her plan is to franchise in the future.

Sue is a current Minnesota State University, Mankato Foundation board member and serves on the Real Estate Committee. She has extensive experience serving on Boards, and provides both for profit and non-profit board training and education.

Cortez Hollis

Protein Water

Graduating in 2014 with a degree in Gender and Women's Studies, Cortez Hollis is now getting a master's degree in Ethnic and Multicultural studies through Minnesota State Mankato while living in Irvine, California. He said taking these courses helped him serve a wider audience for his sports drink business, Protein Water.



Hollis got the idea for his company after watching his cousin Adrian Battles — Minnesota State Mankato alum and former NFL offensive guard for the Green Bay Packers — chug standard protein water with friends after practice. Hollis used the bit of money he had and spent hours doing research, finding certain ingredients to mix and having his friends test out the drinks.

Protein Water is currently in the midst of funding for a nationwide launch. He said the drinks will soon be available on Amazon for purchase.

In the meantime, Hollis currently works with Outreach Program Services of America, a non-profit providing communities with necessary resources. He later learned of the Affordability Connectivity Program, a \$14.2 billion federal program created during the COVID pandemic to connect low-income families with internet access.



Thank You Sponsors

The College of Business would like to extend their gratitude to those who have given financial support throughout the year for the Big Ideas Challenge.

Primary Sponsor

Craig & Pat Lloyd, '72 Alumnus,
Founder of Lloyd Companies



Silver Sponsors

Pioneer Bank



Bronze Sponsor

BankVista



Additional Sponsors

Snell Motors

CrankyApe

MN Valley Business Magazine



Craig & Pat Lloyd

Lloyd Companies

After meeting and graduating from Mankato State University, Mankato Craig and Pat Lloyd got married and began their journey as entrepreneurs. It was back in 1972 when they moved to Sioux Falls, S.D to manage apartments for Craig's uncle, Bob Lloyd.



Craig and Pat did it all to make ends meet for their growing family. Over the years, their team grew, their dreams evolved, and Lloyd Companies became a full-service construction, development and real estate company. Craig and Pat's humble beginnings, small town hospitality and family values kept them focused, where quality, integrity and relationships matter and most importantly where people are the foundation.

Although Craig and Pat no longer serve in the day-to-day operations of the company, they both serve on the company Board of Directors. It is not always easy for Craig to completely pull away from the work that he loves, but the two of them are enjoying the much-deserved time traveling with good friends, family and most of all, their grandchildren.



Thank You Mentors and the Small Business Development Center

The mentors met with and assisted the finalists with their business plans and pitches. Thank you to the Small Business Development Center for connecting us to all our mentors this year.

Mentors

Kevin Sanger

Laura Babcock

Matt Lessard

Nancy Goodwin

Paul Vesey

Hannah Bretz

Special Recognition

The following members of the College of Business team have provided tremendous vision, leadership and support in the development and growth of the Big Ideas Challenge.

Dr. Shane Bowyer; Director of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Asst. Professor of Management

Ashley Niss; Marketing & Events Coordinator of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Dr. Cheryl Trahms; Associate Professor of Management & Entrepreneurship

Jen Cucurullo; Director of Marketing & Communications

Dr. Tom Clement; Asst. Professor of Management

Maverick Entrepreneurship Club members

College of Business Marketing Team





MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



MINNESOTA STATE

Minnesota State University, Mankato
A member of Minnesota State

A member of the Minnesota System and an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. Individuals with a disability who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact the College of Business at 507-389-5420 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY) at least five days prior to the event. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the College of Business at the above numbers. BUSC226BK 11-2023