NC A&T SU Team Wins 2021 Moguls in the Making Competition with Major Contributions from Engineering Students
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Overview of Competition and Results:

During three intense days in the middle of September 2021, fifty students from ten HBCUs participated in the third annual Moguls in the Making competition. This competition was sponsored by Ally in collaboration with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and the Sean Anderson Foundation. Teams were assigned different areas of focus around which to develop a seven-minute, Shark Tank-style, business idea to pitch to competition judges at the end of the 72-hour competition. After their pitches, each team had three minutes of Q&A from the judges about their business ideas. Each team of five, from each university, was multidisciplinary in nature. In the end, NC A&T SU's team came out on top with an innovative idea conceived based on engineering know-how and an orientation toward community service.

Students' Background and Motivation:

The two engineering students on the NC A&T winning team were Lance Davis, a senior in computer engineering and Joshua Weaver, a senior in industrial engineering. Davis was led to participate in the competition by his intense desire to be an entrepreneur. "I want to be an entrepreneur and knew that that the competition would be a great experience …", Davis stated. Weaver's motivation was a bit different. He was inspired by a friend who participated in the first year of the competition who encouraged him to step outside of his comfort zone. Weaver stated, "… I saw the growth in him and wanted the same for myself."

Role of Engineering in Developing the Idea:

Both Davis and Weaver proved to be key contributors to the winning idea, relying heavily on knowledge and experiences they gained related to their respective engineering majors. They proposed the development of community parks in low-income residential areas designed to harvest renewable energy that would serve the dual purposes of (1) engaging the residents in enriching activities and (2) transferring harvested energy to their homes. Davis, who conceived the idea of building energy storage towers within such communities, attributes his contributions to an "understanding [of] how power is generated, transported, and consumed …" obtained from the electrical engineering courses within his curriculum, as well as his "…

basic understanding of electrical grids from a past internship …". Weaver, who previously worked on an energy consumption-related class project, creatively built on the energy tower idea by proposing to have it charged by activity within a community park. "Studying engineering has taught me to always think bigger and outside-the-box when it comes to solving problems.", Weaver said. He also noted how valuable team experiences in his engineering courses helped him with the non-technical aspects of the competition, stating "… we've done a lot of group projects over the years, and that really helped me for the intense weekend …". These two engineering students worked with business, marketing, and public relations majors on the team, who all contributed to transforming the initial raw idea into the winning pitch.

Participants Takeaways:
As the first-place winners of the competition, the five members of the NC A&T SU team were each rewarded with $20,000 scholarships, as well as paid internship offers from Ally. Beyond the monetary rewards, both Davis and Weaver noted that they gained personal and professional growth worth so much more. "I learned more about my strengths … as well as what I need to improve to be a better leader, team member, and professional", Weaver concluded. Davis concurred with Weaver in feeling that what they experienced would be great for every student if it were possible. Davis expressed that "The Moguls in the Making competition is an amazing opportunity for development, and I highly encourage anyone in an undergraduate program to apply."

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