



PVCC Innovation Challenge: 2024 Fall Recap



Pictured: Student competitors, judges, Interim Dean Dr. Sean Petty, Interim VPAA Dr. Eddie Lamperez and EEC Director Dr. Kishore Dash

The PVCC Innovation Challenge is a pitch competition for student entrepreneurs who attend Paradise Valley Community College, and it's easily the most exciting week of the year for our EEC team. Few things are more rewarding than meeting the finalists, bringing in seasoned business leaders to share the ups and downs of launching a company, and seeing the students support each other through one of the most challenging three days of their academic careers.

Now in its seventh year, the PVCC Fall Innovation Challenge Competition (2024) was off to a strong start. Over 18 PVCC students from across the disciplines applied to participate. Eight finalists were competitively selected by a faculty committee to present their business ideas to judges. Three winners were selected by the judges and these winners, thanks to a generous grant from the Maricopa Foundation and Wells Fargo, were awarded cash prizes as follows: First Prize winner - \$1,500 (Micaela Lawless), Second Prize Winner - \$1,000 (Janobia McClure), and Third Prize Winner - \$500 (Abigail Chares).

PVCC Interim VPAA, Dr. Eddie Lamperez, gave out the prizes to the winners. Dr. Kishore Dash, Director of the Entrepreneurship Education Center, welcomed the finalists for the competition. Prof. Tatum Bailey, Health and Exercise Science Division, emceed the Innovation Challenge event with help from Mr. John Chavez, Faculty, Information Science Division at PVCC.

Meet the 2024 Fall finalists & winners

This year's finalists came with a variety of backgrounds, a wide range of business ideas, & many were already at the early stages of revenue generation. Students worked tirelessly to prepare for the final competition that was held at the EEC, PVCC campus, on October 24th, 2024. The judges and other participants were all highly impressed with the caliber of the group.

Keep reading to learn all about this group of rock stars and their pitch ideas!



Micaela Lawless UMOMI: Postpartum Support

1st place winner of Innovation Challenge (\$1,500) |
Also, 1st place winner of The Big Pitch (\$4,000)

Business Description: A subscription-based telemedicine app designed to support postpartum mothers with essential, on-demand care

"Participating in the PVCC innovation challenge competition has been a pivotal experience for me. It allowed me to grow and gain inspiration for my idea through interactions with fellow entrepreneurs, the workshop, and the guidance of Dr. Dash and other mentors. The workshop helped me refine my concept and understand how to present it to investors successfully. Dr. Dash's deep expertise and passion have made a significant impact on my entrepreneurial path."

Janobia McClure Tried & Trusted Advisors

2nd place winner (\$1,000)

Business Description: Focused on helping individuals nearing retirement, Tried & Trusted is a Medicare-focused health insurance agency

"Taking a leap of faith to start a startup is a challenge; add to that, getting up to speak in front of highly successful individuals about your passion gave genuine meaning to the term nerve-racking for me. I am deeply appreciative of Dr. Dash along with his team for taking the time to prepare us and really pour their knowledge and experience into us to not only ensure that we were successful in our pitch, but also successful in our business. The tools I took away from this experience are invaluable, and I will use them when pitching to banks and potential investors in the future."





Abigail Charles Charles Realty & Co.

3rd place winner (\$500)

Business Description: Charles Realty & Co. is a real estate consulting firm specializing in residential transactions, client education, and investment management.

“Competing in the 2024 Innovation Challenge to support my business Charles Realty & Co. was an experience to be cherished. Feedback from Dr. Dash and his colleagues allows business owners to refine their ideas and improve their organizations. I encourage anyone who has interest in this opportunity to participate, you will receive a high amount of insight in a short amount of time. Lastly, as history has shown us, getting first place is not needed to walk away from an experience as a champion with increased confidence in your capabilities!”

Anna Saavedra Little Champions Child Care Services Finalist

Business Description: A childcare center dedicated to providing quality childcare that is affordable for families.

“I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for all the time and dedication Dr. Dash and his team have devoted to assisting me with the pitch preparation for my startup-Little Champion. Their guidance and support have been invaluable in moving forward with the creation of my childcare start-up, and deeply appreciate Dr. Dash’s commitment to seeing this through. Thank you once again for all the efforts.”





Dana Hangaur Hand Pi Finalist

Business Description: Hand Pi is a food and beverage business specializing in the production of hand pies.

“Thank you for the incredible opportunity to participate in the 2024 PVCC Innovation Challenge! It was a wonderful experience, providing a wealth of resources to help propel my business to the next level. Over the course of the competition, I gained valuable insight and feedback, and established connections that will last into the future. I am especially appreciative of Dr. Dash’s leadership and guidance, as well as the support and enthusiasm from the group as a whole.”

Alina Alicajic Shelf Sense Finalist

Business Description: Shelf Sense APP is designed to leverage AI to help users to access their home inventory on food items while allowing price comparisons, grocery list creation, and recipe generation.

“The innovation challenge provided a great opportunity for public speaking, networking, and creativity. From the beginning to the end, this challenge excited me every step of the way. If I had not become a finalist in this challenge, I would not have the strength I do now about committing to a business of my own. Dr. Dash did a very good job at empowering his finalists and curating a wonderful panel of judges that welcomed our ideas. I was very confident in my idea and that itself is far more valuable than acting out of competitiveness. Maybe I did not win, but I did win the experience and personal growth.”





Nicole Crenshaw Jones
Busy Hands Aromatherapy
Finalist

Business Description: Busy Hands Aromatherapy provides customers with economically sustainable and affordable natural pain management solutions and medical massage therapy services.

“PVCC Innovation Challenge Competition was a great opportunity and learning experience for me! I was nervous and excited but learned so many practical tips to refine my ideas. The workshop experience helped me a lot in preparing for the final pitch.”

Yiinyuy Faith
Fayima Fashion
Finalist

Business Description: Fayima Fashion is an online boutique specializing in ethnic and cultural wear, with a mission to create stylish, affordable, and sustainable clothing that empowers women to feel confident.

“The Innovation Challenge competition was a transformative experience that has greatly contributed to my growth. The workshops provided essential insights and tools to refine my business idea for my Fashion business.”

Dr. Dash’s guidance was instrumental; his advice on structuring presentations and clearly communicating our vision helped me build confidence and bring my ideas to life. His encouragement to stay true to our goals inspired me to share my passion for my Fashion business openly. Standing before the judges allowed me to improve my communication skills and gave me the confidence to speak about what truly matters to me. The supportive environment at the EEC was invaluable, and I am grateful for this experience.”



A big thank you to everyone who made this possible!

Judges:



Dr. Sean Petty
Interim Dean of Career and Technical
Education, PVCC



Carol Pool
Business Analyst/ Maricopa SBDC



Lester Peterson
Former Mayor, Town of Carefree



Dr. Eddie Lamperez
Interim Vice President of Academic
Affairs, PVCC

Mentors & Pitch Coaches:



Dr. Dina Preston-Ortiz
Residential Faculty,
Business/IT Division



John Chavez
Residential Faculty,
Information Science Division



Dr. Kishore Dash
Director of the Entrepreneurship
Education Center



Bahman Maneshni
Faculty Emeritus, Maricopa
Community Colleges

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PVCC Business/IT Division, Maricopa Foundation, & Wells Fargo