



## **Solar design software startup wins ideaLabs 2021**

*College student idea competition brings together 11 NEO colleges and universities*

**April 22, 2021 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – A team of undergraduate college students from Case Western Reserve University, Evan Haug, Cooper Reif, Kehley Coleman, Asya Ohran, and Mohamed Mahmoud, won ideaLabs 2021. Their business, LEAF Solar Design Assistant, provides an automated design process for the expanding solar industry that replaces the current bottleneck of manual design that can take several days with a simple, integrated CAD plugin.

Another Case team, Rita Lakhssassi, Anika Washburn, Andrew Engelmeyer, Thomas Ciardi, and Alessandra Sivilotti, won second place with Food Rescue, an app that allows food suppliers to list their excess food for pickup and for nonprofits to view these listings and schedule pickups. Third place was awarded to John Carroll University's College Cribz, led by Brett Clarke, Luca DiLizio, Will Grubbz, and Jake Horst, a platform which connects college students to off-campus housing options. Hopper from Cleveland State University won fourth place and Branch Light from Baldwin Wallace University won 5<sup>th</sup> place. The Hopper app helps its users find and try craft beers, while Branch Light can serve as a piece of furniture and plant care with an integrated UV light.

Cash awards included \$4,000 for the first place, \$2500 for second place, \$1000 for third place, \$500 for 4<sup>th</sup> place, \$250 for 5<sup>th</sup> place, and \$100 each for five honorable mention recipients from Ashland University, Hiram College, John Carroll University, and Kent State University.

Undergraduate students from NEO universities entered the competition on their respective campuses and developed business ideas. The top two from each of the eleven EEC member schools were invited to the regional competition where they presented to local judges for cash prizes.

The competition was open to students from all majors at the eleven EEC partner institutions. EEC partner colleges and universities include Ashland University, Baldwin Wallace University, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University, Hiram College, John Carroll University, Kent State University, Lake Erie College, Lorain County Community College, The University of Akron, and the University of Mount Union.

The competition was virtual and took place on April 8, 2021. Judges represented local businesses and entrepreneurship organizations such as SmartShape, VividFront, gener8or, Venture for America, Wizest, and the Northeast Ohio Student Venture Fund.

Moderated by EbaNee Bond, The Curious Creator & Facilitator, the event featured a student panel of EEC program alumni and college student entrepreneurs who gave an update on their businesses and reflected on their entrepreneurial experiences while the judges deliberated.

Elevator pitches of the prize-winning teams and the student panel recordings are available on EEC's website at [www.eecohio.org](http://www.eecohio.org).

The pitch event was sponsored by local design firm SmartShape Design.

This is the 12th year the Entrepreneurship Education Consortium (EEC) offered ideaLabs to NEO students. The ideaLabs competition is offered free of charge to students thanks to generous support from the Burton D. Morgan Foundation and the Fred A. Lennon Trust.

### **Student participant testimonials**

*"ideaLabs allowed me the opportunity to further develop my venture as well as network with other like-minded students"* – Conner Montgomery, Kent State University

*"Thank you ideaLabs for putting on such a great event! The selected speakers were diverse in knowledge and experience, and my team and I learned a lot!"* – Rita Lakhssassi, Case Western Reserve University

*"My team and I had a great experience presenting our business in front of a group of panelists. We received very insightful feedback that we can use to further the venture."* – Brett Clarke, John Carroll University

*"Thank you and thanks for supporting the dreams of present and future generations."* – Kailyn Ritenour, Ashland University

### **About the Entrepreneurship Education Consortium (EEC)**

The purpose of the EEC is to provide practical "experiential" and theoretical education to students in Northeast Ohio to prepare them to become entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs; create new ventures and jobs and build wealth for the region. The EEC was founded to promote both the concept and the reality of entrepreneurship among college students of all disciplines. Visit us at [www.eecohio.org](http://www.eecohio.org)

### **EEC Supporter**

#### **About the Burton D. Morgan Foundation**

Burton D. Morgan Foundation champions the entrepreneurial spirit, contributes to a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, and serves as a leader in the field of entrepreneurship education through grantmaking, ecosystem building, and knowledge sharing. [www.bdmorganfdn.org](http://www.bdmorganfdn.org)

### **Event Sponsor**

#### **About SmartShape**

SmartShape is a design and innovation consultancy that help companies create new products through integrated, end-to-end expertise. Located in downtown Cleveland, we offer strategic innovation, product development, and integrated manufacturing assistance. Learn more at <http://smartshape.design>