

SFU Press Releases Collection

These archival copies have been generated from web press releases maintained and originally written by SFU Communications and Marketing. Where possible, an effort has been made to preserve the public comments left on the website as well as any included photos or other images. All textual content should be faithful to the original press releases; contact numbers have been removed but they have not otherwise been altered in any way. However, this collection of documents spans multiple generations of web authoring software and not all formatting will be exact.

MEDIA RELEASE

2015 Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize competition winners announced

February 12, 2015

[Tweet](#) [Facebook](#) [Pinterest](#) [Email](#) [Print](#)

Contact:

Jesse Robson, venture1@sfu.ca

Michelle Unrau-Sinclair, 778.782.8728; m_unrau@sfu.ca

Marianne Meadahl, University Communications 778.782.3210; Marianne_Meadahl@sfu.ca

Photos: <http://at.sfu.ca/DbGOYU>

The founders of a Simon Fraser University venture that takes automated design to a higher level—**Empower Operations**—are celebrating as first-place winners of the **2015 Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize**.

The competition, presented by **SFU Venture Connection** in partnership with **Coast Capital Savings**, was held at SFU's Segal Graduate School of Business on Feb. 11.

Prizes of \$3,000 and \$1,500 cash were awarded to Empower Operations and second-place **TerraTap Technologies**, recognizing their entrepreneurial excellence and the success of their growing, stable companies.

This has been the annual competition's biggest year, with a total value of more than \$36,000 in cash and in-kind prizes awarded. Empower Operations won more than \$30,000 of the total.

Empower, headed by professor Gary Wang and student George Cheng and Software Systems student Geoff Groos, produces software that "supercharges" engineering for product designers and manufacturers.

Their flagship product, OASIS, uses simulation software to automate the design process and reduce the need for costly prototypes. This allows for higher quality products while reducing development costs and time to market.

TerraTap Technologies, led by D'Arcy Smith, Judy Hamilton, Nahum Silva and Gwen Schwartz, created **neartuit** as an affordable, easy-to-use content management system for curators to create, publish and manage mobile content and get real-time feedback on visitor patterns and preferences.

"Coast Capital Savings' community promise is to help build a richer future for youth in our communities," says Don Coulter, president and CEO, Coast Capital Savings. "It is through partnerships such as the one that we have forged with Simon Fraser University, through the Venture Connection program, that helps us realize that promise.

"This year's participants impressed us with their innovation and passion, showing that British Columbia's entrepreneurial spirit is most certainly alive and well. On behalf of Coast Capital Savings, I would like to congratulate Empower Operations and TerraTap Technologies on their win and all of this year's participants."

A \$500 Coast Capital Savings Idea Prize was awarded to fledgling company Mr. Arancino, founded by Yannick Cudennec. Mr. Arancino is an innovative twist on traditional Sicilian risotto balls. The product is available in a variety of meat and meatless options as a healthier alternative to fast food such as burgers, poutine or pizza.

Established in 2014, the Idea Prize recognizes the achievements of earlier-stage companies and emphasizes these ventures' potential based on their vision and execution plan, rather than current business results.

The in-kind prizes were sponsored by Coast Capital Savings, [Deloitte](#), [McCarthy Tétrault](#), [Skyrocket Digital](#), [Launch Academy](#) and the [Surrey Board of Trade](#).

Empower Operations also received:

- a cloud-based back office support package, sponsored by Deloitte (valued at \$12,000)
- a legal services package, sponsored by McCarthy Tétrault (valued at \$12,000)
- a visual identity and brand consultation, sponsored by Skyrocket Digital (valued at \$5,000)
- Lean Entrepreneur Program (LEP) tuition, sponsored by Launch Academy (valued at \$1,200)

The company also shared the following awards:

- Annual Surrey Board of Trade memberships, sponsored by the Surrey Board of Trade (valued \$1,200) – with TerraTap Technologies and Mr. Arancino
- Executive luncheons and a business plan review, sponsored by Coast Capital Savings – with TerraTap Technologies and Mr. Arancino

“There were a lot of really good competitors and I felt any one of them could have won,” says Cheng, COO, Empower Operations. “The fact that we did is a testament to our achievements. I’m really proud of our team and thankful for their hard work.

“I’d also thank Coast Capital Savings and Venture Connection for giving us the resources to do what we are able to do.”

The Venture Prize winners competed in a final “pitch-off” on the afternoon of Feb. 11 after securing their place in the finals in a preliminary round of pitches held in January. Competitors delivered a 10-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute question-and-answer session before a panel of industry judges.

The competition judges this year were Wayne Berg, chief commercial officer, Coast Capital Savings; Mo Dhaliwal, director of strategy, Skyrocket Digital; Michelle Osry, partner, Deloitte; Bill Tam, CEO, BC Technology Industry Association; and Shauna Turner, CEO, BC Renaissance Fund.

The winners were announced at a post-competition reception that featured keynote speaker Maryam Sadeghi, CEO, [MetaOptima Technologies](#) and top 2014 Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize winner.

For background on last year’s contest see: <http://at.sfu.ca/HALWvN>

Since 2008, Coast Capital Savings has been supporting the SFU Venture Connection program, which provides support for student ventures from initial idea to business validation. It offers an early-stage business incubator, mentorship, co-op terms, competitions, networking, speaker events, workshops, seminars and other business resources. More than 3,200 students have participated since 2008 in its range of programs, with development services provided to more than 300 student venture teams.

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded almost 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is a leader amongst Canada's comprehensive research universities and is ranked one of the top universities in the world under 50 years of age. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities—Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby—SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 30,000 students, and boasts more than 130,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

- [For the Media](#)
- [For Faculty and Staff](#)
- [About SFU](#)
- [SFU News](#)

[Admission](#)
[Programs](#)
[Learning](#)
[Research](#)
[Community](#)
[About](#)

[Maps + directions](#)
[Library](#)
[Academic Calendar](#)
[Road Report](#)
[Give to SFU](#)
[Emergency Information](#)

CONNECT WITH US

[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Twitter](#)
[YouTube](#)

CONTACT US

Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6