

2013 Winners

NOT ANOTHER NORMAL DAY AT WPI

The Strage Innovation Award judges arrived at the Campus Center Chairman's Room bright and early, and in spite of spits and spats of snow flurries and frigid blowing wind, smiles abound as friends reconnected after a twelve month or more break. With the first student, Stephen Kelly, patiently setting up his 3D printer prototype and presentation, judges enjoyed coffee and a dazzling array of breakfast goodies. They soon settled into cushy, red chairs at the oversized Chairman's conference table. Now ready for their annual job of seriously listening to students convey their passionate enthusiasm for innovative products and services, Stephen was given the official signal to start his pitch. And, presenting first is not easy!

Each team is allowed fifteen minutes to present and demo a prototype. Students typically bring freshly machined parts, roughly assembled models, or completed prototypes which lend visual dimension and credibility to innovative ideas. These parts and mock-ups are truly savored by the hands-on judges who turn the pieces over and over in their hands to see what is new, what is an iteration, and what will work mechanically. The three-dimensional aspect of a mock-up, whether a beta web site, or a new ice skate blade, sometimes tips the decision pointer in their direction. There is something to be said about the extra effort invested in building a prototype.

Seven teams pitched in the spread of four hours. Judges were quick to ask questions, engage the students in what-if scenarios, and share advice about future prospects for their ideas. The teams included **Stephen Kelly** who has begun using open source software to develop a website to enable comprehensive self manufacturing including assembly and part sourcing within 3D printer communities, like hacker or maker spaces. He brought two prototypes, samples of printed products, and demonstrated his existing web site's capabilities. Stephen secured **Second Place** this year! Great job Stephen!

Next was **Arman Uygur** and **Deniz Berk Ozgoren**, who presented a concept for a web site to bridge Turkish students in the US, and other potential employees, to companies hiring in Turkey. They observed an unmet need and are moving quickly to build their platform. Judges were impressed with their research. Arman and Deniz also presented an innovative new soldering iron that has potential to be used in several different markets and applications, greatly simplifying its use. They noted that a prototype would be costly to build, but had great concept drawings.

Jim Lehner introduced a novel food product, targeted to the Obstacle Course Racing community which has experienced serious growth since 2010. Product is being tested at a local food market and reception is good. Jim was a serious prize contender that garnered much conversation from a judge who sits on the Board of the Quaker Oats company. Students each year are always pleasantly surprised and very pleased with the depth and breadth of experience and background in the judging panel.

First Place winners **Karin Greene** and **Devon Rehm** presented their novel ice skate blade product designed to absorb shock upon landing. They have a name, tagline, prototype, and market already in mind. WPI's Technology Transfer Office has filed a provisional this week. Good luck ladies and congratulations on winning the Award this year!

Zuhir Sras presented his concept to improve cell phone recycling, relying heavily on appealing to the empathy for the environmental pollution caused by an anticipated 140 million cell phones that will end up in landfills this year. At the helm of this idea is the efficient, rewards-based exchange of cell phone for cash technology solution.

Our final presenter was **Prateek Sahay**, who introduced his concept of a smart alarm clock that performs several functions through complex algorithms, to be developed. Prateek demonstrated an excellent command of the value propositions, competitive landscape, and exit strategy.





