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Video Game Idea Wins UT Vol Court Business Competition

KNOXVILLE—A video game idea designed to get children interested in energy sciences and technology has won this semester's Vol Court pitch competition at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Charles Chin, a UT graduate student, took top honors. He also secured \$1,000 in start-up money for a company that will produce and sell the new educational video game, which will teach children about energy management.

Vol Court is a speaker series and pitch competition presented by the College of Business Administration's Anderson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The goal of the program is to help people develop new business ideas and gain entrepreneurial skills. It is sponsored by UT Federal Credit Union, UT Research Foundation, and the Terry Adams Law Firm.

A second-place \$500 prize went to Anthony Smith, a junior majoring in public relations, who is developing a low-cost marketing package for small companies. Sarah Hurst, a doctoral student at the UT Institute of Agriculture, received honorable mention for a new Type 2 diabetes treatment.

Chin, an energy science and engineering fellow in the new Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Education, said his winning idea was a result of his love of video games and his experiences in the energy program.

"I wanted to create a product that could not only highlight the challenges of energy sciences and technology, but also garner the interest of kids in primary education," he said. "I've long thought that educational games often take themselves too seriously, so instead of just talking about it, I am making games people want to play."

"I'm from an engineering background," Chin added, "so the business side of the world is completely new to me. Vol Court gave me a great crash course on what challenges and hurdles I would have to deal with, and it also gave me more confidence in this idea. Having the judges see the value in this project has really given me the push to take this through to the end."

Vol Court's popularity has been increasing, with more than 30 percent growth this semester in both number of attendees and number of teams that pitched the idea.

"We had some business and nonbusiness participants pair up to pitch their ideas, which often helps accelerate the time it takes to bring ideas to market," said Joy Fisher, Vol Court managing director.

Vol Court is offered every fall and spring semester and is open to students, faculty, and the general public.