

MIISsion* Impossible 2018



It starts quietly.

All third-year BCom students - 250 of them - plus more than 100 exchange students listen intently to an 8:30 a.m. briefing about their assignment for the day. In teams of five, they heard, they'd spend the morning dreaming up an innovative sustainable, socially responsible business idea that would be a good cultural fit in the home country of the international student on the team.

They take a deep breath.

They have four hours to do this.

They exhale hard.

Their afternoon would be spent pitching their ideas to their professors and local businesspeople.

Deep breath in.

And to convince the judges that their idea is better than their classmates' ideas, that it's not only fantastic but also feasible, they'd have three minutes.

Aaaaaand *go*.

**MIISsion Impossible is named for Gustavson's four pillars: Innovative, Integrative, International and Sustainable/Socially Responsible*



Once they've created their idea, fine-tuned the marketing potential, rationalized the cultural fit and laid out the financial viability, teams practice, rehearse, revise and practice some more.



Returning judge Jennifer Garrett of Power to Be compares notes with Jerome Etwaroo of the Coast Capital Savings Innovation Centre, a first-timer.

Impossible scoring

The challenge issued to the students is to come up with a sustainable, socially responsible, innovative idea for a business that would be a good fit in the home country of the international student on the team.

The technology doesn't yet have to exist but it has to be feasible (or they have to convince the judges that it is). They should also consider marketing and financial viability, but since they have only a few weeks of business courses under their belts, the judges adjust their expectations. And because our international students come from all over the world, the judges might hear an idea that targets Korea or South Africa, Estonia or Taiwan, or anywhere in between. It's up to the students to explain why the idea's a good fit.

The scores for each judge for each component of the score sheet can range from

- 0 - missed the point;
- 1 - a bit sleepy;
- 2 - okay, I get it;
- 3 - pretty cool overall;
- 4 - innovative and impressive;
- all the way to
- 5 - over the moon amazing!



Elizabeth Maze of the Synergy Sustainability Institute rolls up her sleeves to tackle a rubric with Gustavson professor Kimball Ketsa.

Choosing judges

Every year, two people from different units at Gustavson recruit the judges for MIISsion Impossible. In 2017 and 2018, Co-op and Careers' Samantha Toms teamed with Rachel Goldsworthy of the Centre for Social and Sustainable Innovation to invite business leaders from the community and Gustavson professors.

Samantha and Rachel's criteria: prospective judges must have an interest in sustainability and social responsibility, and be open to the innovative ideas that the students come up with. That's it.

Luckily, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and all levels of government in Greater Victoria are full of folks who fit the bill.

The people who say yes to this volunteer gig work in fields ranging from technology to transportation and human resources to hospitality, and some even in companies whose purpose is sustainability. Their diverse experience and expertise are invaluable to Gustavson students as they begin their explorations of the world of business.



Gustavson's Sheryl Karras teams up with Jim Brookes (above), while professor Simon Pek works with Delphi's Paul Shorthouse (below).



Synergy's Kayli Anderson works with Gustavson mentorship lead Malcolm Webster.



Karen Love of Sierra Systems discusses scores with professor Jie Zhang.



The top five pitchers



Andres Marquez, Ania Zapotoczny, Marie-Sarah Raymond and Kiara Hopkins proposed Diner de Coqs, a no-food-waste delivery service in Paris, France. The firm would connect restaurants with homeless shelters and other organizations in order to decrease food waste, help immigrants and the homeless.



Ain Arifin, Ben Schultz, Rupy Gakhal, Houston Song and Ariane Lalau proposed Smarket, a mobile app that connects customers with French grocery stores that have discounted or almost expired items. Businesses would waste less, customers would save money.



Keelan Campbell, Ravdeep Bal, Michael Lesmond, Xiaoxuan Hu, Lisanne Barbu, Bradley Haygens pitched Sustain-a-Home, an environmentally sustainable, cost-effective and safe housing alternative for the German government to provide short- and long-term housing.



Anisa Alvin, Karen Akiyama, Evan Morgan, Scott Spanier and Michaela Bianchini suggested a private-sector project to generate energy with turbines in Japanese storm sewers.



Keith Barr, Jordan Black, Natalie Allabarton, Ethan Dempsey, Divya Sabjiyani tackled waste recycling in Aruba, where the government is wrestling with the issue of too much trash. The team was inspired by a company in Colombia that is turning trash into affordable blocks for construction.

Special mentions

The judges were given the option to provide extra kudos to teams that offered a stand-out element, even if they weren't the top scorers.

Here are their picks:

Team 15's idea was excellent, according to one judge, who added, "Someone should seriously pursue this opportunity."

Team 24's idea really seems viable, two judges said, and it hits all four of Gustavson's pillars: Innovative, International, Integrative, and Sustainable/Socially Responsible.

Team 50 had the best logo.

Team 52, in the opinion of one judge, had a great tagline with Trash into Cash.

Team 56 was feasible, convincing and "extremely thorough in all areas. Can we please invest!"

Team 60 got an extra nod for producing a poster that really communicated their concept. As well, their business idea has "great potential to address social housing around the world," according to one judge.

Team 61 did a stellar job of explaining why their idea was a good cultural fit.



Leah Bell of Fort Properties (centre) and Gloria Darroch, manager of Gustavson's Co-op and Careers department (right), both had extra good things to say about Team 8's Bad Lookin' for Good Cookin'.

The students were "very engaging as a team," they said. "They were personable and made a connection with the judges."

As well, they had excellent presentation skills, with no one person dominating or even appearing to lead.

Leah and Gloria also loved Team 6's logo, which captures their idea. "They had a great intro hook and story to get our attention," Gloria reports.

Gustavson's MIISsion Impossible team is led by the BCom program, with a great deal of help and advice (much of it solicited) from many other units at the school.

We all look forward to this wonderfully impactful event every year.



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The world looks different from here.