iCampus Student Competition yields online tools for improved on campus experiences

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The MIT Council on Educational Technology (MITCET) and the Office of Educational Innovation and Technology (OEIT) announced the winner and runners-up for the 2013 iCampus Student Prize competition at the Office of Digital Learning retreat held on May 17. The annual competition is offered each year to all current MIT undergraduates and graduate students (both individuals and groups) to encourage development of technology to improve aspects of MIT's education and student life.

The grand prize was awarded to Aakanksha Sarda, a rising senior in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), for her work on "WhichClass," an online-exploration tool to aid students in planning their selection of classes. WhichClass will enable students to filter classes and visualize connections between classes within and across departments. In addition to its primary audience of students, the iCampus judges saw the potential of WhichClass to better understand the relationships between courses across departments. These insights are especially important as MIT continues to explore all aspects of digital learning. Sarda will continue developing WhichClass working with the OEIT in the fall.

EECS junior Abubakar Abid received the runner-up award for the project he and his EECS teammates — sophomores Abdulrahman Alfozan and Aziz Alghunaim — developed, called "Lounge": An electronic platform that speeds up and automates the on-campus housing process. Lounge also gives the dorms the flexibility to preserve individual dorm traditions. Abid, who accepted the award at the May 17 retreat, announced that Lounge has been used to successfully run Maseeh Hall's Fall 2013 room assignment process. OEIT expects the Lounge team to continue to refine its software and work with more dorms for future implementation.

The other runner-up project winning project, titled "EduCase" was created by EECS graduate student Sara Itani and EECS senior Adin Schmahmann. Itani and Schmahmann described EduCase as the easiest, quickest and cheapest way to record video lectures — no cameraman, no hours wasted editing. A professor walks into a class, folds open his EduCase, and presses a button for a hassle-free-lecture-recording experience. The judges were very interested in the potential of EduCase to help streamline the process of recording lecture videos as MIT expands further into digital and online learning. OEIT will work with the EduCase team as they continue to develop the project.

Building on the entrepreneurial spirit of service exhibited by MIT students to solve the world's problems, the iCampus Student Competition encourages projects that are developed to the point where MIT can adopt them for integration into its educational and student life programs. Support for the iCampus Student Prize comes from a fund endowed by Microsoft Research.

"All the projects were simply terrific," said OEIT Strategic Advisor for the Office of Digital Learning (ODL) and OEIT Director Vijay Kumar. "The iCampus Student Prize activity is a wonderful example of the innovative and creative engagement of our students in developing creative and constructive opportunities for the application of digital technology at MIT. This is particularly significant at a time when the MIT community is so deeply engaged in understanding the impact of these technologies on the future of teaching and learning at MIT."

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