What is the Challenge?
Established by Joyce Erony in 2013, the Spartan Challenge is a mentored competition that takes students through a series of activities emulating today’s angel and venture award process.

Undergraduate students from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Institute of Art and the Cleveland Institute of Music are invited to participate in our second annual Spartan Challenge, a mentored entrepreneurship competition. The competition consists of two stages:

- The **Business Concept stage** of the competition involves multi-disciplinary teams of undergraduate students forming and working in teams on a business concept. Teams will develop oral “elevator pitches,” a one-page written executive summary and a short 2-minute You Tube presentation describing their concept and ideas.

- The **Business Planning and Mentorship stage** of the competition will include mentoring of teams on the business planning process with a focus on identifying their first “critical path” milestone. Teams will define the overall scope of work, the management and human resource contributions needed to launch the product or service, and the multitude of ways in which the plan can fail (assess risk). Successful teams will have identified the funding and external resources required to take their plan to the next level.

Are there prizes involved?
The top three teams from the Business Planning and Mentorship stage will be awarded funding ($10,000, $5,000, $2,500) to enable them to begin implementation of the business concept; additional cash prizes will be awarded. A business mentor will be a part of the team going forward to ensure team success.

How do I enter?
Teams enter the competition by submitting a Letter of Intent to

Colin Drummond, Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering  
email: colin.drummond@case.edu

or

William Grimberg, Senior Director of National Development  
email: william.grimberg@case.edu

Other information can be found at: https://case.edu/spartanchallenge/

What are the deadlines?
Saturday 16 January 2016, Letter of Intent due (sample provided on the website)  
Monday 18 January, Workshop 1: Business Concept Workshop  
Thursday 4 February, Workshop 2: ProForma Workshop  
Sunday 7 February, Business Concept DUE  
Tuesday 16 February, Semifinalists announced  
Friday 26 February, Semifinalist information session  
Wednesday 16 March, Business Plan  
Friday 25 March, Semifinalists present their business plans
Can you tell me a bit more about the two-stage process?

Stage 1: Business Concept.

The Business Concept stage of the competition involves multi-disciplinary teams of undergraduate students from across the CWRU, Cleveland Institute of Art, and the Cleveland Institute of Music campuses forming and working in teams on a business concept. Teams will develop oral “elevator pitches,” a one-page written executive summary, and an optional short 2-minute YouTube presentation, describing their concept and ideas. The documents will address the following questions:

- What is the business concept?
- Who are your customers and how will you reach them?
- Who are your competitors? What is your main advantage over these competitors and why hasn’t anyone thought of this before?
- How is your business going to make money and over what time frame?
- What are the one or two key risks that can influence your business?
- Who are your team members and what role will each of them play?
- What external resources do you need to develop and run this business?

Students will be provided instruction and mentorship on the business concept through hands-on Workshops and web-site resources. These are presented to a 3-5 person panel that creates a “short-list” of the top six teams, each winning $500 to move on to the next phase. Judges are potential team mentors. During Stage 1, students will learn to distinguish between an “idea” and a commercially viable “opportunity.”

Stage 2: Business Planning and Mentorship.

The Business Planning and Mentorship stage of the competition is intended to mentor teams on the business planning process with a key outcome and identification of their first “critical path” milestone. Teams will assess the overall scope of work, the management team needed to launch the product or service, and the multitude of ways in which the plan can fail (assess risk) is an important part of the educational process. Successful teams will have identified the funding and external resources required to take their plan to the next level.

The top 3 teams from the Business Planning and Mentorship stage will be awarded funding ($10K, $5K, $2.5K) to enable them begin the implementation of the business concept. A business mentor will be a part of the team going forward to ensure team success.

How is Mentoring performed?

Project mentoring is done on a “team” basis, that is, the organizers have a pool of professionals that help teams at various times throughout the process. Some will have financial expertise and can assist in pro forma development. Other professionals have strong market experience and can offer industry-specific insight. Teams are not assigned a single mentor, but a variety of mentors for the 2016 competition will be provided. The “team” concept eliminates the issue of “conflict of interest” for those mentors that also serve as contest judges.
Guidelines and Rules

Eligibility

Competitors must be undergraduate students from any CWRU school or college, the Cleveland Institute of Art, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Students who have won the Spartan Challenge in prior years are ineligible to compete in a subsequent year.

Stage 1 Entry by Letter of Intent (LOI)

Teams interested in applying to the 2016 Challenge are required to register and submit a “Letter of Intent” (LOI) electronically through the Challenge website: SpartanChallenge.case.edu. A sample LOI is provided on the website. Information provided in the LOI enables the Challenge organizers to plan for the necessary support, guidance and resources that teams will need for the Stage 1 Business Concept competition. During the LOI preparation phase of the competition, students should:

- Identify an idea, process, service, or technology around which to build their opportunity analysis.
- Review Challenge eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, and application instructions.
- Reach out to the Challenge coordinator to discuss their idea.
- Seek interdisciplinary team members.
- Attend one of the Challenge Overview information sessions.

An LOI normally will include the following (but is not limited to):

- Company/team name and Team members
- Advisors & mentors
- Brief service or product description
- Goals

The letter of intent will be due by 11:59 pm Saturday January 16th, 2016 so that the students can participate in a Special Workshop, led by Joyce Erony, on the contest at 1:00 pm on Monday January 18th, 2016.

The LOI qualifies participants to enter Stage 1 of the competition.

Stage 1: Business Concept: During the Business Concept stage of the competition students will build skills that enable them to assess whether the idea they have created is a realistic business opportunity. All teams members are encouraged to participate in one of several OA workshops designed to address key topics in the Challenge evaluation criteria. Teams should network around campus to seeking support from CWRU entrepreneurial centers (clubs and programs) and potential business and faculty advisors to prepare their application. Student teams will submit their completed application electronically through the Challenge website no later than 11:59 pm, Sunday February 7th, 2016. Application and updated event dates will be available on the Challenge website.

Business Concepts are presented by each team to a 3-5 person panel that selects the top six teams, each winning $500 to move on to the next stage of the competition, Business Planning and Mentorship.
Stage 2 Entry by being a winner in the Stage 1 competition

Stage 2: Business Planning and Mentorship. During the Business Concept stage of the competition students will build skills that enable them to assess whether the idea they have created is a meaningful opportunity to pursue. The top 6 semifinalist teams advancing to the Concept Launch phase will be paired with a team of entrepreneurs, business leaders, and other experts who will work closely with teams to refine and strengthen their concept to enable a launch of the team’s winning OA.

The Business Planning paper should generally be a minimum of 5 pages and a maximum of 10 pages, with up to five (5) pages of appropriate support documents, charts, examples, drawings, etc. The paper will ideally address all of the following:

1. What is your product or service being offered?
2. What is the value proposition? Will your product fulfill a need?
3. Who is the customer? Will you be selling to an intermediary or to the end user?
4. How will the customer get access to your product or service? Describe the product or service value chain (distribution system). What marketing tactics will you use? What are you going to charge for it? How much will it cost to produce your product or service? Do you know what the competition charges? How will the entry of your product into the market effect the price?
5. What are the demographics, trends, patterns of change of the industry?
6. Are there any barriers to entry? If so, how will you overcome them?
7. Who are the competitors? Who, What, Where is your competition? Do you have a niche? Do you have some kind of business advantage over your competitors?
8. Who is your perfect customer? How will you find them? What is the demand for your product or service?
9. What are the features and benefits of the product or service? What value are the customers receiving from your product or service?
10. What about intellectual property?
11. How is the product or service differentiated from others on the market?
12. As students, what will you need as specific skills or expertise to start this business?
13. What are your team’s gaps and how will you fill them?
14. What are your start-up capital requirements? What start-up resources do you need? Be specific; give the details of the materials needed, systems needed, etc. What is the plan? How much inventory will you need to carry?
15. What are the amounts and sources of expected revenues? How will you make money? What are your revenue streams? Make a preliminary estimate of the first three (3) years income and expense.

Schedule of events
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**Frequently asked questions**

What types of projects are ineligible?

Generally, all projects must involve legal activities and work aligned with the principles of scholarly activity at the University. For instance, games of chance or projects that promote gambling are generally not acceptable.

What if I don’t produce a YouTube video for my entry?

The submission of the video is entirely optional. Alternatively, you can use PowerPoint with a voiceover, Camtasia, or any other presentation media for your two-minute video. If you do not have access to any of these tools and want to create a video, please contact the organizers for more information.

Does the award money go to the team or is it split among the team members?

Award money goes to the team, it will not be split among team members. Each Stage 2 team will form an LLC for their company, using the winnings from the Stage 1 competition to register the LLC. Funding the LLC is in the spirit of the idea that winning concepts are fundable ventures.