FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2020

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University of the District of Columbia and Guardian Life Bring Ideas Innovation Challenge,
Technology Grant to D.C. Students

Students gain business experience, win cash awards in first-of-its-kind challenge; $25,000 laptop grant bridges digital divide

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In partnership with The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America (Guardian Life), the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) has announced the winners of the 2020 Student Ideas Innovations Challenge, an idea competition with the goal of bringing solutions to life challenges facing college students. In addition to supporting the challenge, Guardian is awarding UDC with a $25,000 technology grant to be used toward purchasing laptops for continuing community college students in need. Winners of the challenge receive cash awards as well as valuable business experience.

Keandre Butler, a college sophomore from D.C., was awarded first place for his innovative idea to develop a term life insurance premium product for college students to cover the costs of expenses due to the loss of the head of the household, family member or job.

“I designed this product idea for an insurance premium for college students, to address the need for financial support during an unexpected crisis and to protect them in times of financial instability,” said Butler.

Rounding out the winners of the challenge were:

- **Second Place:** Brea Ellis and Ebony Rempson for their idea of a UDC virtual financial advisor that could provide personalized finance advice to students about credit basics, money management, wealth building and insurance. Students would benefit from a trusted online personal finance community.

- **Third Place:** Asia Archie, Semyia Bennett, J’Quan Boykins and Andre Robinson for an online matching platform, called Hire Education, to match students with scholarships, work study programs, on-call tutors, peer-to-peer mentorship and other scholarly resources needed to succeed while in college.

The Student Ideas Innovation Challenge reinforces UDC’s motto to “Aspire. Accomplish. Take On The World,” with hundreds of students leveraging the opportunity to apply design thinking principles and their creativity to devise potential solutions for their communities while providing Guardian Life diverse consumer perspectives.
More than 85 idea submissions were captured, and four teams pitched their ideas in a virtual shark-tank to an expert panel. The winning teams will receive cash awards, with the first place winner receiving $1,500, second place team members receiving $1,000 each and third place team members $500 each.

The challenge between Guardian Life and UDC was a pilot higher institution partnership with UDC’s Administration, Faculty and Staff and was the first time Guardian Life has collaborated with a university to bring the innovation challenge to college students.

“Our long-standing partnership with Guardian Life is a perfect complement to our Equity Imperative strategic plan. Our goal is to be a model of urban student success, where all students achieve their highest levels of human potential,” said UDC President Ronald Mason. “Initiatives such as the Student Ideas Challenge expose our students to real-world challenges as well as the opportunities they present. There is no better way to learn than through the experience of doing. We are proud of our relationship with Guardian.”

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“Our has a strong commitment to providing equitable opportunities for future talent and brought this innovation challenge to UDC to supplement student academic work with experiential learning experiences,” said Veena Jayadeva, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Guardian Life. “Having worked with UDC supporting personal financial management classes and workshops at the community college for the last five years, this innovation challenge was a natural progression in the relationship to provide students with a way to uncover and propose solutions to the barriers they face in continuing their academic journey.”

About UDC

The University of the District of Columbia (www.udc.edu) supports a broad mission of education, research and community service across its colleges and schools: The College of Arts and Sciences; the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences; the School of Business and Public Administration; School of Engineering and Applied Sciences; the Community College; and the David A. Clarke School of Law. The University has been designated as an 1862 federal land-grant institution and a Historically Black College and University. The University of the District of Columbia is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.