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AACC, NSF Announce 12 Student Teams to Advance to Community College Innovation Challenge Finals

Community college students will attend an Innovation Boot Camp to pitch their STEM solutions to real-world challenges

Washington, DC – Today, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), in partnership with the National Science Foundation (NSF), announced that it has selected 12 finalist teams to advance to the final round of the Community College Innovation Challenge (CCIC), set to take place in June 2025.

Now in its ninth year, the competition seeks to strengthen entrepreneurial thinking among community college students by challenging them to develop STEM-based solutions to real-world problems. It also enables students to discover and demonstrate their capacity to use STEM to make a difference in the world and translate that knowledge into action.

Teams consist of two to four students and a faculty or administrator team mentor. Finalists attend an Innovation Boot Camp in June and interact with entrepreneurs and experts in business planning, stakeholder engagement, strategic communication, and marketplace dynamics. The Boot Camp culminates in a Student Innovation Poster Session on Capitol Hill with STEM leaders and congressional stakeholders and a pitch presentation to determine the first, second, and third-place winning teams.

“Congratulations to the 2025 CCIC finalists,” said Walter G. Bumphus, president and CEO of AACC. “The finalist projects showcase the incredible talent and creativity of the nation’s community college students. I am proud to stand with our partners at the National Science Foundation to provide this forum to advance these student leaders as they become our future scientists, entrepreneurs, and engineers addressing real-world issues and positively impacting our daily lives.”

Among the ideas teams presented this year are solutions for addressing food insecurity, burn care, aviation safety, nicotine addiction, energy efficiency, fire prevention and safety, neonatal health, and autonomous and assistive technologies. The 12 finalist schools and their projects are:

- ***Bergen Community College (New Jersey)***
  Project: Pop-Up Hydroponic Farms Made From Recycled Materials
    - To address the lack of access to produce in urban communities, the Bergen Community College team designed a modular hydroponic grow system using recycled shipping pallets that can be stacked together inside vacant properties to create "Pop-Up" hydroponic farms.

- ***Coalinga College (California)***
  Project: The Dream Team Burn Care Innovation
    - The Coalinga College team seeks to improve the treatment of burn-related injuries through the development of a burn relief spray with hydrogel technology that soothes pain, promotes faster healing, and prevents infection.

- ***Dallas College (Texas)***
  Project: Team AVIADAR – Alerts VIA Detection and Ranging
    - AVIADAR is an innovative LiDAR-based system tailored for aviation, providing pilots with real-time alerts about their surroundings, which will reduce fatalities and set better standards for accident prevention.

- ***Des Moines Area Community College (Iowa)***
  Project: Smart Tapering Vaporizer with AI-Coaching – AI-CQD
    - AI-CQD is a Smart Tapering Vaporizer to address nicotine addiction. The team's tech-driven solution integrates real-time habit analysis, psychological reinforcement, and customizable tapering to address evolving user needs enabling a structured, adaptive quitting journey.

- ***Henry Ford College (Michigan)***
  Project: SunSync – Smart Blind System for Comfort and Energy Saving
    - The Henry Ford College team designed SunSync, a self-powered smart blind system that harvests solar energy, uses sensors, and applies machine learning to improve energy efficiency, comfort, and privacy.

- ***Holyoke Comunity College (Massachusetts)***
  Project: Green Computer Processing – Reducing Data Energy Consumption
    - AI-powered data centers are projected to significantly increase global electricity demand. The Holyoke Community College team built a closed-loop cooling system that recaptures lost energy, reduces waste, and cuts costs while setting a new standard for sustainable data processing.

- ***Houston Community College (Texas)***
  Project: The NanoSense Mask
    - The Houston Community College team has designed the NanoSense Mask to aid firefighters. The mask is equipped with sensors that detect harmful gases and monitor firefighters' health in real time.

- ***Irvine Valley College (California)***
  Project: Defend LA – Automatic Fire Prevention System
    - To address the surge in wildfires, the Irvine Valley College team proposes an automatic and pressurized hose system that deploys fire retardant gel around the exterior of a structure.

- ***J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (Virginia)***
  Project: Automated Street-Cleaning Robot
    - The J. Sargeant Reynolds team proposes the design of an automated street-cleaning robot equipped with sensors and smart navigation to keep public spaces cleaner with less human effort.

- ***Middlesex Community College (Massachusetts)***
  Project: InSight
    - InSight is a wearable navigation system disguised as sleek headphones incorporating sensors, LiDAR technology, and AI-powered imaging cameras to assist the blind with navigation and spatial awareness.

- ***Perimeter College at Georgia State University (Georgia)***
  Project: RoyaNest – Neonatal Thermoregulation Made Simple
    - RoyaNest is a low-cost device designed to address birth asphyxia, which uses layered evaporative cooling to maintain a baby's body temperature in the therapeutic range for 72 hours, improving infant survival rates.

- ***Tulsa Community College (Oklahoma)***
  Project: Portal – An Integrated Drone Delivery Solution
    - The Integrated Drone Delivery Portal is a smart-home feature enabling secure, efficient drone deliveries. Built into homes during construction, it includes a motorized external hatch, theft-resistant storage, and an interior retrieval door.

To receive updates about the 2025 Innovation Boot Camp and the winners, follow @Comm_College or visit www.aaccinnovationchallenge.com.

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About AACC

As the voice of the nation's community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) delivers educational and economic opportunities for nearly 12 million diverse students in search of the American Dream. Uniquely dedicated to access and success for all students, AACC's member colleges provide an on-ramp to degree attainment, skilled careers, and family-supporting wages. Located in Washington, D.C., AACC advocates for these not-for-profit, public-serving institutions to ensure they have the resources and support they need to deliver on the mission of increasing economic mobility for all.
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