Stryker Awards Banquet recognizes outstanding student leaders

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In the short time that they have existed, they have increased their member retention by 40 percent and established a presence on the Illinois Tech campus. Stango also mentioned that during the UNICEF conference earlier in the semester, the Illinois Tech chapter was awarded "Most Knowledgeable Club" for their "insights and unique methods."

This year's awardee for Outstanding Commitment to Service was Gertrude Kasole. The award was presented by Lynne Meyer, Director of Spiritual Life and Diversity for the Office of Campus Life. Having worked with Kasole for a few years, Meyer said that Kasole's "involvement in service has spread far and wide since her first semester." She added that Kasole continues to do impressive work, having launched a project in October in her hometown of Kinshasa, Congo. The project allowed her to fundraise and take several supplies home for those in need.

The Richard Babcock Leadership Award, according to Student Affairs, "honors one outstanding sophomore or junior undergraduate student who has evidenced significant leadership skills and academic achievement." Sophomore Soren Spicknall was this year's awardee and received his award from Provost Frances Bronet. Before receiving his award, Spicknall received significant praise from Bronet for his "array of knowledge" and "deep awareness of what it means to be in different cultures" among other things. She went on to say that he was "driven, dedicated, balanced," and most conversations with him felt like "an intellectual massage."

The last section of awards were to the 16 recipients of the Clinton E. Stryker Distinguished Service Award. Each of these recipients has made significant contributions to campus and student life at Illinois Tech through their student organizations and other similar avenues. As each person received their award, Dean Stetz mentioned some of their contributions and a few of the organizations they are involved in. The awardees of the 2016 Clinton E. Stryker Distinguished Service Award are Christopher Alexander, Christina Castillo, Gabriel Connors, Adrian Duenas, Emma Ghariani, Aaron Grudowski, Leslie Lyons, Jermiron Morris, Khadijah Nesbitt, Sany Nguyen, Gina Qualter, Soren Spicknall, Melanie Standish, Merridith Tedtsen, Rahul Wadhwani and Maria Warren.

Illinois Tech startup COPA presents at semifinals of RECESS Pitch competition

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After looking for a product that protects fragile bottles from breaking while traveling, and not finding any in the market, Ben Rifken and Meriem Sakrouhi decided to create one: COPA.

COPA is an elegant and durable protective armor for your bottles and fragile items, preventing them from breaking and spilling on your luggage.

This started at the beginning of the spring semester of this year, as a project of the 'Student New Venture Development and Entrepreneurship' IPRO. However, since its inception, the final goal of the team was not a grade but the beginning of something bigger.

At the same time that the business plan was getting developed with the help and advice of Nik Rokop, the team was working on the making of COPA with the help of John Welin and Salomon Rodriguez at the Idea Shop. After 12 drafts and six prototypes, COPA is planning to launch the final product in seven weeks.

COPA participated in the semifinals of the RECESS Pitch competition, which is a national college competition for new startup ideas. The semifinals took place at the Concord Music Hall, right after the CAPITAL Championship. Each team gave a four minute pitch on stage to a panel of elite judges, followed by four minutes of Q&A. COPA battled against Audiovert (Northwestern) and Clean Slate Messenger (UIC), which is the one that moved on to the finals.

"It was a great experience. We got to meet a lot of people who are either going through the same process that we are, or who have already been through it." said Meriem Sakrouhi.

COPA also received the honorable mention in the Business Innovation Showcase track at IPRO Day. The team is going to be working on continuing COPA and launching their website the same day as their product this summer. The team says that it is a good way to finish school before graduating.

For any more information, please visit their social media page : facebook.com/copasolution

Photos courtesy of Nik Rokop (left), Meriem Sakrouhi (right)