

# Entrepreneurship for Education: The Goldman Prize



## Background

Children and adults in the U.S. and around the world are more dependent on education than ever before. In the age of smart machines, a whole set of new needs has arisen that have not yet been satisfied by schools and colleges. This creates both a need and an opportunity for entrepreneurs to develop tools that can help children and adults learn, in schools and colleges, in other organized settings, and on their own. The University of Pittsburgh School of Education encourages its students, faculty, and alumni to take their best creative ideas and turn them into usable tools to help assure that every person has a chance to fill some of the new roles that are evolving as machines take over many traditional roles.

The Pitt School of Education has received a gift from Richard and Renée Goldman to support promotion of educational entrepreneurship among Pitt students, faculty, and alumni. The Goldman Prize competition will provide finalists and winners with important benefits, including mentoring and financial support to nurture a big idea for education. It also is meant to create new opportunities for applicants to work with faculty on a project that might significantly improve education, to go beyond classwork and dissertations to connect with faculty around direct efforts to help children and/or adults learn what they need to be productive and successful citizens.

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- *Get help making your idea into a product or service.*
  - *Win some cash to help refine your idea.*
  - *Help rebuild the middle class by preparing people for the jobs of the future.*
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## Key Elements

The contest is open to all members of the Pitt family: current students, alumni, and faculty.

The Goldman Prize program is meant to stimulate more educational innovation within the broader Pitt family. The core element of the plan is a competition for a **Big Idea** that significantly addresses a serious problem in American education and that has the potential to

- be developed as a *product or service*,
- *substantially improve education*, and
- eventually be *usable and affordable* by the various schools and other learning opportunities in which people participate (public, private, and charter schools, libraries, homes, after-school centers, community colleges, NGO's trying to help workers retread for new jobs, etc.), so that large numbers of children end up being more ready for life in the age of smart machines; readiness is less shaped by families wealth, race, or ethnicity; and workers whose jobs are lost to smart machines can find new work roles.

The winner(s) of the competition will receive

- a financial contribution toward developing the idea to be scalable and salable,<sup>1</sup>
- connection to other University resources to support bringing the innovation to market,
- publicity through local, alumni media, and national media outlets,
- faculty support, and
- advice from successful educational entrepreneurs.

Between the University's courses and programs and its Falk Laboratory School, test environments for initial prototyping might also be available, although winners will be encouraged and helped to find more challenging test environments as soon as possible. To help potential competitors prepare for the competition, an informal online webinar will be conducted in March to brief participants on how educational ideas come into being at scale. **To receive notice of the webinar and notice of how to find the recording afterwards, please sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/thegoldmanprize>.**

A wide range of big ideas are invited. Now and in the future, most people will change work roles several times during their lives. To prepare for a life that includes periods of quickly learning new jobs, people will need a broad and flexible preparation during preschool and school years with many opportunities to practice suddenly learning a new body of knowledge. School will need to be, much more than in the past, an apprenticeship for adult life. Beyond schooling, technical colleges and universities will need to become more effective and efficient to fit the lives of people who need both longer-term formation and just-in-time learning. Providing effectively and economically for these needs will require widespread innovation to enhance and improve current education opportunities for people of every age, from preschool to adults already in the work world. While any educational tool is an acceptable candidate for the Goldman Prize, we encourage potential contestants to consider, in addition, to tools to support current schooling, tools that address some of the new learning needs, including the skills of learning efficiently and quickly; valued socioemotional skills; skills of civic participation; the ability to evaluate information; facility in collaborative activity, including the 4 C's (dealing with complexity, communication, collaboration, and creativity); management of personal finances and some basic economics; and developing confidence in one's abilities.

## The Goldman Prize Competition Timeline

The following are the key elements of the competition.

1. *Early March.* The *webinar* to assist potential contestants takes place. It will be recorded and made available afterwards from a School of Education website. Participation in the webinar is not required of contestants for the Goldman Prize, but it may be helpful. **To receive notice of the webinar and notice of how to find the recording afterwards, please sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/thegoldmanprize>.**

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<sup>1</sup> When possible, to minimize tax complexities, this contribution will be in the form of reimbursement of expenses for idea development if the winner is a student or faculty member. For alumni, the award will be made as reimbursement of idea development expenses that meet the criteria announced for the competition.

2. *March 31.* Contestants submit a 3-5 page description of the innovation they want to develop with help from the Goldman Prize. This should be a slightly longer version of what would be the elevator talk that one would need to gain support for an innovation. **Entries should include the name, email address, and contact phone number of the entrant and should be submitted electronically as Word or pdf files via the web page at <https://tinyurl.com/goldmanprizesubmissions>.**
3. *April 15.* The Goldman Prize committee will announce 5-15 finalists. Each will be assigned a mentor to help them develop their big idea further. Mentors who assist the finalists from April 1-Aug 1 will have expertise in the finalist's area of focus. These mentors could be: past winners of Pitt's other entrepreneurial contests, faculty from an array of Pitt's schools (Education, Business, Computing and Information, etc.), and known entrepreneurs in the community. A finalist may select a mentor with whom they are familiar. Also, each finalist will receive access to University funds of up to \$1000 to help further develop their idea.<sup>2</sup> The finalists will work with their mentors to develop their final presentation for the Goldman Prize.
4. *About September 15.* Goldman Prize Awards Presentation. Each finalist must submit material (written or in other media) by *September 15*, including information to be specified by the Goldman Prize committee when finalists are named. On September 15 (approximate date), they will make a pitch of no more than ten minutes to the panel of judges. During a brief reception, judges will deliberate and select winners (we anticipate 1-3 winners, but will be flexible if entries so justify). Winners will share a prize pool of \$10,000, along with further mentoring, access to support from the Innovation Institute, and potentially access to prototyping environments.

## Mentoring and Support

We believe that many members of the Pitt community have good ideas about how to improve education but lack real understanding of how innovations turn into products or services, how those products or services do or do not change actual education practice, or how such offerings can be effectively marketed. Accordingly, we will recruit experts to mentor contest finalists on how to make the case for their innovations. The webinar also will help contestants prepare their contest entries. Potential webinar contributors include Dr. Richard Goldman, Dr. Sarah Scott Frank, and other people at Pitt or in the business world with entrepreneurship experience.

There are many different possibilities for the “big ideas.” Some might be sold to schools or school systems. Some might be sold to and delivered by institutions of higher education. Some might be sold to and/or delivered via such institutions as museums and other nonprofit entities. Some might be distributed via websites. Winners will be helped to find appropriate development sites for their ideas. The first round of prototyping ideally will be in a University space that matches the target customer base but is more tractable. Possibilities include Falk School and the University Center for Teaching and Learning, but there are other possibilities as well. For example, a patient education tool might initially be tested on patients of a group clinical practice,

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<sup>2</sup> See Footnote 1

and a tool to help parents keep up with the math their children learn in school might initially be tested on a sample recruited in part by a community development nonprofit. Finalists will receive help in finding an appropriate development site.

We also will try to get current entrepreneurs and other experts to provide coaching to the “big idea” winners as they prototype and test their concepts.

## Support from the Innovation Institute

The Goldman Prize program will take advantage of the expertise in the Innovation Institute and integrate its programming into the overall portfolio of supports for innovators. One goal is to make a connection of the Innovation Institute and its resources with some curated innovation ideas.

## Advice from Educational Entrepreneurs

Once we have picked the winner(s), an important element of the project is to connect them with people who have turned innovations into effectively marketed products and services. The Goldmans themselves are certainly an incredible resource for a new entrepreneur, and we also can provide connections to other strong people at various stages in developing marketable concepts that can improve education.