

“Disseminating Innovations for the Common Good” (SP723)
Course Accomplishments
June 2006

For the first time, in Spring 2006, “Disseminating Innovations for the Common Good” (SP723) (also known as “D-Lab III”) offered students the opportunity to focus on the dissemination of innovations for the common good in developing countries. The class took lessons from a variety of development theories, case studies, and practical plans for the students' own projects. Each of five teams developed an idea, project or social business plan, with the aim that it be "ready to roll" by semester's end

Sometime the team’s project was a continuing one from D-Lab I (Development) or D-Lab II (Design). All teams’ projects were submitted to the IDEAS Competition and/or other competitions available for entry in Spring 2006. Projects ranged from the upgrade and dissemination of a ceramic water filter in Ghana, to disaster relief shelters that can be deployed in emergency conditions worldwide, to off-the-grid energy solutions for Lesotho, to low-cost housing for urban slum dwellers in the Philippines.

Even in the first-ever semester of offering this new course, DLab III teams captured an unusual number of awards. This was especially gratifying given the small number of students enrolled (8), however the small numbers allowed focused mentoring and a round-table seminar-style class.

Class members or class teams won the following competitions:

- First Prize: MIT \$100K Entrepreneurship Competition – Development Entrepreneurship Track (\$50K award) – CentroMigrante – low cost housing for slum dwellers in Manila, Philippines
- First Prize: IDEAS Competition: FirstStepCoral (\$5,000)
- Second Prize IDEAS Competition: Peanut Revolution (\$3,000)
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts - \$125K Ignite Clean Energy Business Competition – Winner-Student Prize
- 2006 World Bank Development Marketplace – Synergetic Power Systems – Solar Turbine Group - Lesotho – Winner (only winning team in this competition that was a student team)

The creation of the teams’ proposals for these competitions were major accomplishments of the DLab III course, as was the success some teams had at winning these various competitions. Winning is not everything, and it is fair to say that, win or lose, all teams’ learned and grew in new directions and skills. Their success reflects the "how-to" skills honed in the class, relating to building international collaborations and to piloting, implementing and scaling-up an innovation. Through these prizes or other grants obtained from similar proposals, these teams will be able to make their dissemination plans a reality.