

# Undergrads' networking platform wins top prize in sustainability contest

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A group of university students are developing a learning platform to connect students virtually.

The second-year undergrads had found it difficult to make friends in online classes after they kicked off their first semester in university amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The platform – the brainwave of Singapore Management University (SMU) computer science students Jennifer Poernomo, 19, and Michelle Leong, 21, Nanyang Technological University information engineering media student Ng Yan Qing, 20, and SMU economics student Jeannette Lee, 20 – connects students to study groups and matches tutors to students. It also has a question-and-answer forum and provides study materials.

Their proposal won them the grand prize at the second annual Tata Consultancy Services Sustainathon Singapore yesterday. The competition seeks to inspire young innovators to solve sustainability challenges through technology.

The competition, which took in

submissions from October to November last year, saw 67 participants put together 26 proposals for the challenge's partners – SG Enable, NTUC LearningHub and the National Institute of Education.

The 2021 challenge was to develop technology-based solutions to re-imagine learning experiences, in line with Singapore's focus on building diversity in schools and life-long learning with digitalisation as a main tool.

"It was very hard for us to make friends in school with online classes, where all we know of our classmates are their names on a screen... We hope that our platform can start a culture of peer-to-peer learning during the pandemic," said Ms Leong, who added that the launch of the platform is still in the works.

Following the launch of the first Sustainathon in 2020, TCS expanded it with local editions in the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. An Asean edition will be held in the first quarter of this year, when the top two teams or individuals from each country will compete for the grand prize – a reward of up to US\$10,000 (S\$13,500).



Members of the winning team (from left) Ng Yan Qing, Jennifer Poernomo, and Michelle Leong explain their peer-learning platform Edugether to President Halimah Yacob after the Tata Consultancy Services Sustainathon Singapore yesterday. Their fourth member Jeanette Lee was not present. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

At the prize-giving ceremony yesterday at The Signature at Changi Business Park, President Halimah Yacob noted that more than 152 million children and youth worldwide have been affected by school closures due to the pandemic, with 27 per cent unable to fully participate

in online learning.

The top three teams or individuals in the Singapore edition of Sustainathon received \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 respectively, and a chance to execute their ideas if they are viable. The top two winners will also represent Singapore

at TCS Sustainathon Asean.

The runner-up team consisted of National University of Singapore business analytics second-year students Joel Toh and Lee Zheng Hong, second-year business administration student Shawnn Tan and second-year information sys-

tems student Poh Mao Xin, all 23. They developed a video conferencing and learning management system with interactive tools and post-lesson analytics to mitigate hybrid learning challenges.

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