Students submitted innovations on Nov. 4 to the university’s Lucas College and Graduate School of Business, after which finalists competed for awards, funding and mentorship in the annual Silicon Valley Innovation Challenge (SVIC) on Monday and Tuesday. The innovative projects for SVIC are solution-based business ideas targeted toward local or global issues and are judged on practicality, originality, implementation and overall presentation.

**BEST OVERALL INNOVATION AWARD**

*“Assero transparent mask”*

International team members: Aiste Pupiute, Goda Masione, Lauryna Dabasinskaite and Samantha Cepononyte

The team said it was quite a shock when Sen said in an email, “Ultimately, we want to create and propel a community of excellence in sustainability within the biopharma/bioindustry.

Santha Pruthi, Assero associate professor in the School of Global Innovation and Leadership and the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business, hosted the SVIC and said there were 83 submissions this year, which is consistently high compared to 2020. While the number of innovation entries remained high, she said the 2021 SVIC was the college's first time spreading it over the course of two days.

“For the last two years, the SVIC has been held as a half-day event. As the first-ever SVIC in a virtual setting in 2020, we tried to space out our variety of sessions over the course of a day,” Pruthi said. “Post-event feedback from our judges suggested that they desired even more time in a [remote] setting to familiarize themselves with all finalist innovations ahead of the first formal evaluation round.”

She said the university’s college of business and the SVIC host, the Silicon Valley Centers for Entrepreneurship, wanted to give more time to the finalists to network with the judges.
Live comedy returns to San Jose

By Evan Reinhardt

Live comedy in San Jose has returned after 21 months of remote shows and outdoor sets, giving audiences a chance to laugh from behind masks.

The San Jose Improv—located at 62 S. 2nd Street—was one of the first comedy clubs in the country to close during the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. General manager David Williams said that the club management wasn’t interested in hosting remote shows.

“While I respect the people that did [host remote shows], it’s just not our brand. We didn’t go near that,” Williams said in a phone interview. “As any comedian, they’ll say it’s just not the same. It’s like swimming with seven swastikas on.”

As the number of COVID-19 cases increased, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a stay-at-home order on March 19, 2020 shuttering all non-essential businesses in California, including comedy clubs, according to a March 19, 2021 ABC10 News article.

Williams said although hourly staff was furloughed, the improv’s rent and manager’s wages were subsidized during the club’s closure by parent company Levity Live, an entertainment production company based in Los Angeles. The company produces other entertainment, including scripted and unscripted television shows, documentary series and multi-camera live events.

Several comedy club managers and performers said they had to reimagine their shows’ productions because of the pandemic.

“While a traditional indoor comedy show is challenging when many in-person events were halted,” said Improv Robert Cochran while conducting remote shows. “For the online shows, there was a lot of resistance at first, both from a number of players and some audience members,” Cochran said in a phone interview. “You’re so used to picking up on every cue in a live setting, and now we’re trying to do this over a flat medium like Zoom.”

The reopening date is subject to change as the comedy club team monitors the number of COVID-19 cases, Kramer said. “We’re just waiting. We definitely don’t want to put our audience in danger, or our performers,” he said. “When we open we’re going to make sure everyone’s is masked and vaccinated before they can come to the show.”

As audiences watched from their parked cars on the field, comedians performed on home plate with help from the stadium sound system and a high definition video board. Bilo said in a phone call, “You’re used to talking to somebody straight to their face, now you’re talking to a windshield.” Bilo said instead of claps, you’d ask for honks.”

The comedians also explored performing over Zoom, he said, using any method that would still allow them to produce a show.

“We all made more money than we did regular replays,” Bilo said. “A lot of people weren’t affected financially because they kept their jobs, they could work from home. [Audiences] were very generous in supporting the shows.”

Although remote shows were difficult at first, alternative platforms like Twitch will remain a popular venue for comedy, Bilo said.

“Twitch is an interactive livestreaming service with content including gaming, entertainment, sports and music, according to its website. “A lot more comics got their Twitch channels because you had to put out content to some degree,” Bilo said. “I never would’ve had a Twitch, I probably would not have known Twitch existed if it weren’t for the pandemic.”

Bilo and Escobedo returned to hosting their monthly live comedy competition show “Pun Your Poison” indoors in June 2020 at Clandestine Brewing in San Jose, Bilo said.

The San Jose Improv club also reopened on June 25, 2020, with a sold out show headlined by comedian and actress D.L. Hughley. David Williams said he’d noticed new audience members attending shows since the club reopened.

“We have a lot of new faces. Maybe they got into Zoom comedy during the pandemic,” Williams said. “We’re getting a new audience that even before the pandemic hasn’t been to a comedy show.”

Improve Robert Cochran said he wanted to continue his comedy career during the pandemic.

“Cochran, Ph.D. student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, teaches applied improvisation to private groups and companies including Google and Disney.

Applied improvisation takes concepts and techniques of improvisation and connects them to business, relationships and life, according to the Applied Improvisation Network website.

Cochran said conducting remote shows was challenging when many in-person events were halted. “It’s never reached the same fever pitch of going to a live show,” he said. “There’s nothing like being in the room for live improv, it’s electric.”

Jeff Kramer, San Jose Improv general manager and Chief Entertainment Officer of San Jose Comedysportz at 288 S. Second Street, said performers quickly adjusted to the evolving platforms for comedy shows.

“We had to completely rediscuss how we could do improv on Zoom. But we figured out a way to do it, and that’s just due to the skill of the players,” Kramer said. “Even our fans we’ve had for 25 years thought it was an interesting format.”

Kramer said while adapting to remote work, performers experienced “Zoom burnout.”

Kramer aims to reopen San Jose Comedysportz for live audiences in January 2022, but will broadcast shows simultaneously for audiences who don’t feel comfortable in-person, he said.

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While a traditional indoor comedy club may be ideal for most comedians, Bay Area stand-ups Bilo, who requested to be referred to by his stage name, and Ruben Escobedo III took their comedy outdoors in September 2020, hosting a series of comedy events at Excite Ballpark, home of the San Jose Giants.

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For Williams, he said being back in the club reintroduces live comedy into peoples lives, but also allows him to return to the joys of his own life.

“I missed the daily comradery and seeing people socializing,” he said. “I’m so glad to be around not just the comics, not just the guests, but my staff. They’re my pseudo-family, I’ve really missed my staff and my team.”
By Estevan Lopez

Spartans hope to remain champions

After a successful 2020-2021 season, the San Jose State tennis team is eager to return to the court in January.

Spartan Tennis Complex, located at the university’s South Campus, will host the Sacramento State Hornets in the season opener on Jan. 26, 2022.

The Spartans secured their spot as conference champions in the 2021 Mountain West Women’s Tennis Championship and now hope to bring another trophy to SJSU in the upcoming spring season.

“Two years ago, we won the tournament, leaving head coach Chad Skorupka eager for the upcoming season. We’ve had a number of [Intercollegiate Tennis Association] All-Americans…but also just within the athletic department there is a lot of success,” Skorupka said in a Zoom call.

He said the team has grown since the previous season because he’s also recruited internationally.

“Over the pandemic we’ve had to be more creative in recruiting, but we’ve also recruited internationally.”

Skorupka said her biggest challenge was recruiting in traveling to Europe shortly before the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

“I was discussing with my assistant one day I said ‘Hey, look, I better get out of here before shit shuts down, something’s gonna happen,’ as the first wave of March, I booked a trip for recruiting,” Skorupka said.

Babic was recruited from Belgrade, Serbia and came to SJSU in 2020 as a freshman.

“I joined last year on [Aug. 20] but because of COVID my freshman year in the fall, I was back home [Serbia],” Babic said. “So technically, I came to SJSU January this year.”

Skorupka said she didn’t mind lengthy trips and long hours to find top tennis talent. “We’re a very international sport and I’m going to try to attract the best players that we can find from wherever,” she said.

After being recruited from Sofia, Bulgaria in 2019, third year player Rozalina Youseva said she is happy for the upcoming season.

“I really wanted to find the best place for me, because I also want to stay in the states after I graduate, so I wanted to find a school not only for my college experience, but also for my future,” Youseva said.

“So I saw San Jose State and the head coach, I got in touch with him and when I came here, I just fell in love with the team and the school.”

Youseva said she has high hopes for the upcoming season. “We’re going to try to win the conference again, I think we have a great team and we’re ready.”

Rozalina Youseva

The most recent addition to the team is tennis junior Lara Marco Mas (left) and Oleksandra Andrieieva (right) as they anticipate a serve during a Nov. 6 match in San Jose.

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Notre Dame must be preserved

Remodeling plans are tacky, prioritize tourists’ interests rather than historical value

Sarah Dwyer
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Two and a half years after a fire severely damaged Paris’ Notre Dame Cathedral, grief has turned into anger and outrage at the recently-drafted restoration plans. After flames wreaked havoc for 15 hours on April 15, 2019, the world came together in tragedy. Within days companies, institutions and individuals donated or pledged 845 million euros – equivalent to about $950 million – to restore the historic architectural feat, according to a Sept. 18 New York Times article. Following the fire, French President Emmanuel Macron announced Notre Dame would be restored in time for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics. The Notre Dame Cathedral began construction in 1163 and opened its doors in 1345; the monument is known for being among the finest examples of French Gothic architecture.

Yet, there have been increasing suggestions to add contemporary designs to the reconstruction, disrupting nearly a thousand years of history. Last year, Macron suggested a contemporary spire to replace the original but was quickly and rightfully met with opposition. Many united over restoration, but the restoration has turned into redesign. Gothic architecture largely identified the monument. If the officials in charge of this project choose to go through with the redesigns they are defying decades if not centuries of conservatorship in art, history and architecture. Modern day Europe can’t escape its history, largely because much of it still remains.

France, which is still predominantly Catholic, should not have their symbol of faith turned into a bigger tourist destination.

About 80% of French citizens identify themselves as Roman Catholic, according to a July 1, 2001 Brookings Institution article. The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington D.C., according to its About Us webpage.

However, historian and writer Michael Pastoureau said instead of leaving Notre Dame as it was, the other option is to expel the faithful to make room for tourists, according to an April 15, 2020 La Croix article. La Croix is a French-language Roman Catholic publication based in Paris. He told La Croix, “To do this, we would have to deconsecrate Notre Dame and transform it into a museum.”

As if France doesn’t have enough museums.

The cement blocks and cookie-cutter repeats we call modern architecture cannot compete with Notre Dame, or any of Europe’s architectural past.

According to a Nov. 19 article in The Western Journal, the interior would include a “discovery trail” of 14 chapels emphasizing Asia and Africa. Biblical quotes would be projected on the walls in different languages. Classical sculptures, confessional boxes and altars would be replaced with modern art featuring light and sound effects to provide an “emotional space.” Ironically, the original architecture was already designed to evoke emotion and nurture spirituality.

Maurice Culot, a well-known French architect, told The Western Journal on Nov. 19, “It’s as if Disney were entering Notre Dame . . . It’s a kind of theme park and very childish and trivial given the grandeur of the place.”

Notre Dame needs to remain true to itself and its history. The cathedral was constructed to provide a common home for people of faith and anyone else who found themselves under the stained glass.

While its roots are undeniably French and Catholic, the doors to Notre Dame as a cathedral are open to all and can continue to be without turning into a reimagined, overly all-inclusive museum for the modern day tourist.

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