



**PHILADELPHIA**  
UNIVERSITY

## News

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### Philadelphia University Nexus Maximus 2015 Seeks Health Innovations Through International Collaboration

**PHILADELPHIA**, Sept. 15, 2015 – How much sugar is in that soda you’ve just selected to accompany your evening meal? How many calories will it add to your day—and in what way will those calories impact your overall health?

Over a long weekend, four Philadelphia University students from three different disciplines—plus one graduate student from across the ocean—came together to discuss those questions and the global health challenge they represent.

And, in just three days, this self-proclaimed “dream team” was able to develop a user-friendly solution, debut a working prototype on campus, astound the University’s president and take home the Most Innovative Concept Award at PhilaU’s Nexus Maximus 2015.

“It was so simple, but so clear,” said President Stephen Spinelli Jr. “I immediately thought this is something that’s already market-ready, something we should install here. It’s mind-blowing that there’s no limit to the creative potential of people who have spent only a few days together.”

These five students comprised one of 45 teams made up of 330 students who participated in PhilaU’s second annual Nexus Maximus sprint project, sponsored by industry partner Johnson & Johnson.

For Team TALLY—which included Aria Lee, a junior industrial design major, Evan McNaught, a sophomore landscape architecture major, Caroline Hinckley, a senior fashion merchandising major, Kellyn Kemmerer, a freshman fashion merchandising major, and Thomas Demmer, a mechanical engineer at Paris-Est d.School in France—it was all about “giving the power to the users.”

“A lot of people don’t realize how much sugar and how many calories are in the soda they are drinking, so we wanted to make it easier for them to recognize and visualize,” said Lee,

gesturing to the prototype, which counts the number of calories and grams of sugar in the soda dispensed from a soda fountain and equates to a number of sugar packets, so the user has a better idea of just how much he or she has consumed.

Data collected by the device could be sold to beverage and insurance companies to create a revenue stream, McNaught said.

Team TALLY received a lot of feedback when they set up their prototype in the University cafeteria, and many students were shocked when they realized just what they were putting into their bodies.

“People don’t like when you tell them something is bad for them,” Lee said. “It’s better to give them a little push so they’ll find out for themselves.” Furthermore, she added, the prototype could be expanded to a host of other uses in the future, including vending machines and measuring the fat content in foods

The students in Team TALLY were pleased with how well they were able to work together, each offering unique perspectives and skills that complemented one another.

“I was able to bring my experience as an engineer, and each one of them brought their different visions and methods of solving problems from the design and customer sides,” Demmer said. “I learned a lot from their views, which I can bring back with me to France.”

D.R. Widder, vice president of innovation at PhilaU, said industries and universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity in innovation – a concept perfectly illustrated by Nexus Maximus.

“Most of these students didn’t know each other, and that’s especially true for our international participants,” Widder said. “These students came across the ocean to sleep on our students’ couches, share ideas and collaborate with them on real-world challenges. It’s also true for our freshman participants--imagine heading right into an experience like this when you’re brand new to campus.”

That sentiment was supported by Michael Moscherosch, director of research and development for external innovative and alliances at consumer industry giant Johnson & Johnson. “From the industry perspective, we get great ideas from an event like this,” he said. “These students are unencumbered by prior knowledge, data and other constraints. They often go down pathways we don’t understand at first, but then we end up wondering why he hadn’t thought of them.”

Tod Corlett, director of PhilaU’s industrial design programs, was equally impressed and said the second year of Nexus Maximus exceeded expectations—both by its sheer size and the ingenuity of the ideas produced.

“This year, I saw a combination of innovation, common sense and critical thinking when it came to solving problems,” Corlett said. “PhilaU students, and the students involved in our global network, were able to create powerful solutions that can actually meet real-world challenges.”

Another one of those solutions won the People’s Choice Award by focusing on the problems of obesity, nutritional deficiencies and mental health issues among children in low-resource areas.

“With Viridian Education, we bring the outdoors inside – giving young children the opportunity to grow their own food, learn about science and work collaboratively, and then prepare this healthy, locally grown food in their own kitchens,” said Michael Gregori, a sophomore landscape architecture major, who developed the concept with his multidisciplinary teammates Austin Becker, Clay Helfrick, Danielle Schipps, Declan Flynn, Gabby Karlis, James Laurie and Yisma’el Shareef-Trudeau.

“Working as a team toward this idea allowed us to make connections and realize the benefits of our teammates’ experience and knowledge,” he said. “Feedback from the professors really helped, too. This was a true cross-collaboration and we believe the resulting solution could make a significant impact on children’s health.”

*Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,700 students enrolled in more than 70 undergraduate and graduate programs. As the model for professional university education, the University, through its award-winning Nexus Learning approach, prepares students to be leaders in their professions in an active, collaborative and real-world learning environment infused with the liberal arts. Philadelphia University includes the innovative Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce; the College of Architecture and the Built Environment; and the College of Science, Health and the Liberal Arts. For more information, go to [www.PhilaU.edu](http://www.PhilaU.edu).*