Jack McDonough Retires with a Parting Message:

Keep Our Street Cred!

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Menlo grads. It started with a dinner sponsored by a core group of at least 30 alums and faculty, including Frances Mann-Craik SBA’76, Dr. Craig Medlen, former Trustee John Turco, and the venerable “Judge” Russell. As I welcomed the SBA alumni that evening, I could feel the good will and eagerness to help the younger generation of grads. Our SBA alumni volunteered to take grads to lunch for the purpose of getting an idea of the grads’ career interests and then going to bat for them with business introductions.

With all the uncertainty facing these graduates, the help extended by older SBA alums proves that caring and well-intentioned mentorships are vastly better than searching online or seeking help from placement agencies.

Another fine example of alumni involvement with Menlo students is the annual Business Plan Competition, which took place April 17th in Brawner Hall. I believe that the initiative, energy and courage it takes to stand up to knowledgeable business professionals to deliver and defend a favored business idea is a strong indication of one’s readiness for significant career accomplishment and I strongly support it being continued.

During this process of updating Menlo into Silicon Valley’s Business School, we should reinstate the SBA Roundtable and keep the annual Business Plan Competition going to keep our street cred!

After Menlo, a strange thought for me, I will be reacquainting myself with my first love: mountain hiking! I’ll also be traveling to Europe, as I love the people and architecture. I’ll be getting back to painting too... watercolor and pen & ink. Reconnecting with my family in the Boise area will be a priority, as well as spending more time with friends. I’ll be dabbling in real estate and other investment ventures, as well as doing some charity work with Big Brothers and animal shelters.

Well, I’ve had my turn at bat, and it has been very rewarding. I want to thank everyone who reads this and those whom I’ve been privileged to know, for your kindness and your devotion to “our cause.”
Anticipation was high when the winner of the 5th Annual Business Plan Competition was finally announced! Out of ten submissions, only five made it to the final round, and only one plan won the coveted first prize and took home a cool $1,200! In fact, this year’s winning plan, presented before an enthusiastic audience in Brawner Hall, received an unprecedented two first place votes from preliminary judges! A big congratulations for this year’s winning plan goes to…

Wait, let’s back up.

The Business Plan Competition is the creation of Jack McDonough in conjunction with the Entrepreneurship Society, to which Jack serves as an advisor. Jack started the competition so that students can showcase what they’ve learned in a competitive process. Each business plan was written by either an individual or a team of students and presented to a panel of six judges: Francis Mann-Craik, Jim Massey, Bob Zider, Roxy Rapp and Keith Kadera. The judges ranked each plan based on its core business idea, whether it followed a successful format (such as Guy Kawasaki’s “The Art of the Start”), and the oral presentation by the plan’s writer(s). Spelling and grammar were also taken into consideration, which proved to be trouble for some plans.

The nail-biting presentations, held on April 17th, each consisted of a five-minute setup, a fifteen-minute oral presentation, and a ten-minute Q&A session with the judges. The presentations of the final five plans to the judges were professionally delivered by the students and greeted with cheers from the energetic audience.

Third place was awarded to Elham Aslani, Deborah Black and Katherine Fulp-Allen for their business plan, “Humanly Defined.” Second place was given to Ricky Grech, Matt Simpson and Nick Von Sonn for their plan, “Grech Athletics.”

The first place business plan, a brilliantly structured concept titled “Alexander Valley Essentials,” was written and presented by Meghan Hulsey. The premise behind her plan was the manufacturing of high-quality soaps and facial creams. The products would be sold in high-end retailers and via the internet.

Jack McDonough commented, “Once again, our students responded to the challenge! The quality of the submissions was quite good and two rounds of judging by SBA alums produced three winning plans. This is another fine example of the high caliber of our Menlo students!”

The Business Plan Competition award ceremony was held on April 29th with the winners receiving cash prizes and personal congratulations by President Haight.

Jack McDonough, first place business plan winner Meghan Hulsey and President G. Timothy Haight at the 5th Annual Business Plan Competition awards ceremony