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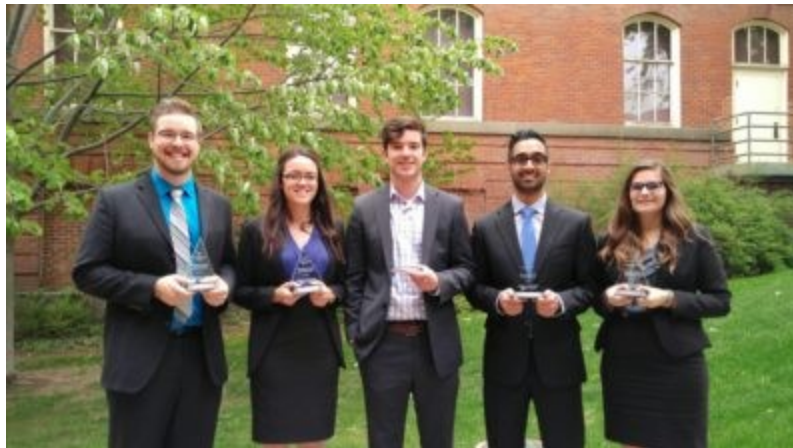
UPCOMING EVENTS | CONTACT SUE MCMURRAY, EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
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## Blood Pressure off the Cuff

By Meagan Garrett

“Marie told us in class one day, ‘the key to entrepreneurship is finding and solving problems people don’t know they have.’ So, that’s what we did,” says Carena Ramos, founder and chief operating officer of VBCardio.

She refers to Marie Mayes, director of the WSU Center for Entrepreneurial Studies in the Carson College of Business and her engineering capstone class, which is a senior design class cross listed with entrepreneurship.



*Left to right: Brandon Graham, Carena Ramos, Joshua Tenzler, Vikram Chandra and Katherine Keller.*

“It was a crash course in business for us, which was hard. But it was where VBCardio was born, so it was also very good!” says Ramos.

Ramos, along with fellow engineering students Brandon Graham and Vikram Chandra, had an interest in using their engineering education to work in the cardiovascular field. They started talking to doctors, nurses, first responders from the Pullman Fire Department, and “really, anyone Marie could connect us to. We would tell her we needed another industry contact to interview, and she would come back the next day with three people for us to call. WSU, Marie, the Center—they all went above and beyond for us,” says Ramos.

The idea for VBCardio came from one such interview where the team found the problem the first responders didn’t know they had. They asked a responder how long it took to take a patient’s



*Viable prototype of the Cardio One, VB Cardio's blood pressure monitor that can be worn on a finger*

blood pressure, and he said “before or after I get the blood pressure cuff on?”

The team began working to create a solution and developed Cardio One, a device similar to a pulse oximeter that attaches to a patient’s finger and monitors their blood pressure—no cuff, no stethoscope, no long wait times. The device also minimizes cost and maximizes efficiency.

“We knew we had something great,” says Ramos. “But if this was going to be a viable business, we needed someone on the management team who understood business.”

That’s where Josh Tenzler comes in. Tenzler is a business student who was taking an entrepreneurship class with Mayes and heard about VBCardio. He reached out to Ramos and asked to get involved. He is now the chief financial officer.

“It was the same with Katie,” Ramos says, speaking of their chief marketing officer. “I was talking to my friend Katie over coffee, telling her about the Cardio One, and she wanted to be a part of it. We didn’t have any marketing or sales strength on our team, so she joined.”

With their dynamic team and prototype in place, VBCardio entered the WSU Business Plan Competition. Their idea was validated when they took third place in the competition.

The team credits the BPC Resource Nights as instrumental in their preparation for success at the competition. Hosted by the WSU Center for Entrepreneurial Studies, Resources Nights is a six-week series in which industry experts offer student entrepreneurs or aspiring business owners guidance on writing and presenting a strong business plan.

VBCardio plans to spend the summer doing further research and developing the Cardio One prototype. Within 18 to 24 months, they will have a viable product to sell in the health market.

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**Categorized** Featured Stories, June 2016, Student Spotlight