



# The Hotel School

## Cornell SC Johnson College of Business

Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute  
for Hospitality Entrepreneurship

## Cornell Hospitality Pitch Deck Competition Official Rules and Guidelines

### Summary

The Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration sponsors the Cornell Hospitality<sup>1</sup> Pitch Deck Competition. This competition is an experiential learning opportunity for student entrepreneurs contemplating, starting, or operating an early-stage venture who are looking to improve their pitching skills with the potential to earn seed funding for their venture.

Students register for the competition in early fall and submit their pitch decks in October for review by a team of industry judges. Four finalists will be selected to present in November to a panel of industry judges. The winning team will be awarded a cash prize of \$3,000, second place will be awarded a cash prize of \$1,500, and the third place team will be awarded a cash prize of \$500.

<sup>1</sup>“Hospitality business” for the purpose of this competition is purposefully broadly defined and includes businesses providing support services to the hospitality industry (e.g., businesses such as Micros Systems that provide software and hardware to restaurant and lodging businesses).

### Entering and Important 2019 Deadlines:

#### Wednesday, September 18, 2019

- Register Team to compete via [Startup Tree](#)

#### Friday, October 11, 2019 by Noon

- Submit Reading Pitch Deck via [Startup Tree](#)

#### Tuesday, October 29, 2019

- Four finalists selected and invited to participate in Pitch Deck Final Presentation

#### Thursday, November 14, 2019 by Noon

- Finalists to submit Presentation Pitch Deck via [Startup Tree](#)

#### Tuesday, November 19, 2019 at 5pm

- Pitch Deck Final Presentations to panel of judges (in front of audience)
- Winners announced and prizes awarded (at reception following the event)



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### **Team Eligibility Criteria**

1. Teams consisting of no more than two full-time Cornell University undergraduate and/or graduate students are eligible but at least one the member of each team must be a SHA student.
2. Students must be in good academic standing (i.e., GPA not less than 2.0).
3. Students may be members of only one team.
4. For finalists to be eligible to win, all team members must be present for the final presentations.
5. Teams are encouraged to seek advice and counsel from successful entrepreneurs, professionals, and experts, but teams must present only their own work product. The Cornell University Honor Code applies to all aspects of the Competition

### **Requirements for the Business Idea**

1. The objective of the Pitch Deck Competition is to provide an experiential learning opportunity to student entrepreneurs looking to practice pitching a hospitality business idea. As such, most ideas entered in the Competition will be ideas for new independent ventures in the seed, start-up, or early growth stages. Generally excluded are the following: buy-outs, expansions of existing companies, real estate syndications, tax shelters, franchises, licensing agreements for distribution in a different geographical area, and spin-outs from existing corporations. Licensing technologies from universities or research labs is allowed, assuming they have not been commercialized previously.
2. Ideas should be drawn from the hospitality sector. For the purpose of this Competition, “hospitality” is purposefully broadly defined and includes businesses providing support services to the hospitality industry (e.g., businesses such as Micros Systems that provide software and hardware to restaurant and lodging businesses).
3. The hospitality business ideas pitched may be for both for-profit and non-profit ventures.

### **Other Requirements**

1. All author(s) of the pitch decks must agree that the work they are submitting is their original work. The author(s) will retain all rights to the pitch decks regarding its use at all times prior to and following the Competition.
2. By participating in the Competition, author(s) give the Competition organizers the right to post the pitch decks on a password protected website in order for reviewers/judges to access the items, post comments, and assign numerical scores to the submitted items based on an established rubric.
3. Finalists are required to sign a waiver allowing the Pillsbury Institute the express right



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to photography and videotape their Pitch Deck Presentation, and all finalist author(s) will be asked to sign a photo/video release form allowing Cornell University to use the Pitch Deck Presentation recording and Pitch Deck Presentation materials within the University for faculty, staff, students, and the Pillsbury Institute for educational purposes. In addition, final presentation videotapes may be posted on the School of Hotel Administration website for public consumption.

4. Finalists are required to sign a money allocation agreement prior to the Pitch Deck Final Presentation. The agreement is meant to prevent any possible disagreements regarding division of money amongst team members after the competition winners are announced.
5. **Non-confidentiality:** Some aspects of the competition, including but not limited to oral presentations and question/answer sessions, are open to the public at large. Any and all of these sessions may be broadcast to interested persons through media, which may include radio, television and the Internet. Any data or information discussed or divulged in public sessions by entrants should be considered information that could possibly enter the public realm, and entrants should not assume any right of confidentiality in any data or information discussed, divulged, or presented in these sessions. Due to the nature of the competition, we are not able to ask judges, reviewers, staff, or the audience to agree to or sign non-disclosure statements. However, the Pillsbury Institute will make every effort to limit distribution of pitch decks presented at the competition. **We cannot guarantee that other individuals will not obtain access to electronic or hard copies of the pitch deck.** The Pitch Deck Final Presentation will be open to the public and will be videotaped. Attendance by media personnel is expected and final presentations will be posted on the School of Hotel Administration website for public consumption.
6. **Copyrights & Permissions:** If a team uses copyrighted materials and/or images from a third-party in their presentation or business plan, they must obtain permission and authorization in advance from the owners to use this material.



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### **Pitch Deck Competition Guidelines**

Building a pitch deck is one of the best ways to grab your audience's attention and answer key questions about your business idea. Pitch decks help people to understand, care about, and take action. Two of the most common types of pitch decks are reading decks and presentation decks. Reading decks are documents that can be read and understood without the author present. Presentation decks serve as visual support for an entrepreneur's presentation. This competition provides students the opportunity to experience creating both types of pitch decks.

The first round of the competition requires students to prepare a Reading Pitch Deck. Submissions are due by **Noon EST on October 11, 2019**. Please submit via Reviewr and name your file using the following format: ReadingDeck\_TeamName.pdf

Four teams will be selected to compete as Finalists. Teams will be notified of whether they are invited to advance in the Competition by October 29, 2019.

Finalist will submit a Presentation Pitch Deck prior the Pitch Deck Competition Finals on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at Noon.

### **Reading Pitch Deck Guidelines**

Decks must be limited to 11 slides. Participants should determine how best to communicate their business idea. Do not embed links, include text in the notes field, or include appendices. Teams that do not follow these rules will be disqualified.

### **Presentation Pitch Deck Guidelines**

Four teams will be selected to compete the Pitch Deck Competition Finals. Teams will be notified of whether they are invited to advance to the Finals of the Competition by October 29, 2019.

Presentation Pitch Decks are limited to 11 slides and up to 5 Q&A slides. Each invited team is required to submit a Presentation Pitch Deck and may choose to submit an updated Reading Deck no later than **Thursday, November 14, 2019 at Noon EST**.

The Reading Pitch Deck can be in PDF from, but the Presentation Pitch Deck should be in PowerPoint. Electronic copies should be submitted via Reviewr and should be named according to the following format:

- FinalReadingDeck\_TeamName.pdf
- PresentationDeck\_TeamName.ppt

Any team that does not submit their materials by this date will be disqualified.



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### **Oral Presentation Guidelines**

The Final Presentations will be delivered to a panel of judges in front of a live audience. The teams in the Final Presentations will have 10 minutes to present their hospitality business idea followed by a 5-minute question and answer session from the panel of judges. Teams can assume that the judges have read their Reading Pitch Decks. Once a team has finished its presentation, it may observe both the presentation and Q&A session of the teams that follow it. Teams may NOT observe other presentations until after they have made their own presentations. The order of presentation will be determined randomly.

Detailed scheduling for the Final Presentations will be provided to the teams later in the Competition. The Final Presentation Pitch Deck will be loaded onto a USB to be used during the Final Presentation. Teams may also demonstrate a prototype of their product during the Final Presentation (including a food sample if that is the product). They may NOT bring other materials for the judges such as handouts, etc. Teams are NOT REQUIRED to use materials in the Final Presentation.

The results of the competition will be announced during a reception immediately following the Pitch Deck Final Presentations.



### Judges and Judging Criteria

Judges for the competition will be comprised of faculty, alumni, investment professionals, venture capital and private equity investors, and entrepreneurs.

Judges will score the teams’ deliverables using their judgment with respect to specific competition criteria, as summarized below. The teams receiving the highest collective scores on the Reading Pitch Deck will advance to the Final Round. The winner of the Competition will be determined by the Final Presentation judges’ ranking of the teams. These rankings will be based on the judges’ assessment of both the Reading Pitch Deck and the Final Presentation (including Presentation Pitch Deck). The competition is intended to simulate the real-world process of entrepreneurs soliciting start-up funds from early-stage investors. Thus, the winning team will be the one whose deck clearly communicates an innovated hospitality business.

Competition criteria that the judges will consider in their assessments include but are not limited to:

Reading Pitch Deck	Presentation Pitch Deck
<b>Hospitality Business Idea:</b> Identifies a significant problem/opportunity; presents novel solution within the hospitality industry; likelihood the idea will make an impact (i.e. financial and/or social value); each claim is supported; data is sufficiently interpreted; graphics well-incorporated into the argument.	<b>Hospitality Business Idea:</b> Identifies a significant problem/opportunity; presents novel solution within the hospitality industry; likelihood the idea will make an impact (i.e. financial and/or social value); claims are supported.
<b>Organization:</b> Clear structure of each page; a specific point is developed on each page; argument is easy to follow – good visual and logical direction on each page, and between pages.	<b>Organization:</b> Clear overview (idea presented at the start); organization is logical and easy to follow; clear connection made between claims and evidence; strong closing.
<b>Pitch Deck Design:</b> Good balance of verbal and visual elements, good skim value; white background, professional color scheme, high resolution images; consistent fonts and font sizes (20 to 28 point for headings, 11 to 14 point for text); visual elements and graphics are professional and add to the logical argument, no unnecessary illustrations.	<b>Pitch Deck Design:</b> Slides appropriately support message; slides are clear and attractive; slides include limited text and meaningful graphics.
<b>Writing Style and Mechanics:</b> Clear, concise, and professional language; argument is crafted with credibility – strong evidence, varied and properly documented sources; ethical data displays; no errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage, and proofreading.	<b>Delivery:</b> Appropriate presentation style and tone for the message; credible, authentic, and transparent; professional but natural, conversational style; consistent in team delivery – similar volume, pace, etc. for both members; good eye contact – no reading off slides; good use of pauses (no fillers); professional handling of questions during Q&A.

The decisions of the judges in each round of the Competition are final. Judges may alter prize amounts. If no submissions are deemed worthy, no financial awards will be made.



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### **Advisor Guidelines**

Advisors are available to teams through the Pillsbury Institute's Entrepreneur in Residence program. Teams must provide all advisors with the competition's advisor guidelines (i.e., the "dos and don'ts"). Teams must also report the names of their advisors when submitting deliverables.

#### **Do's: Activities that are Encouraged**

- 1) Do respond to questions and concerns from teams.
- 2) Do read and give constructive feedback on each aspect of the Reading Pitch Deck.
- 3) Do suggest other resources or individuals with whom teams can consult.
- 4) Do identify weaknesses in the hospitality business idea that may concern investors and suggest ways of dealing with these concerns.
- 5) Do listen to and provide critical feedback on teams' Pitch Deck Presentations.
- 6) Do keep the Pitch Deck confidential except if asked to distribute it by the team.

#### **Don'ts: Activities that are Discouraged**

- 1) Don't write or re-write any part of the Reading or Presentation Pitch Deck. These documents should be the work product of team members only.
- 2) Don't substantially steer the development of the hospitality business idea or take leadership of the team.
- 3) Don't, if advising more than one team, discuss information about or your advisory activities for one team with the other team.
- 4) Don't discuss the team's work with individuals involved in judging the Competition.
- 5) Don't distribute the Reading or Presentation Pitch Deck to others without permission of the team or use the information or hospitality business ideas in it for purposes other than acting as an advisor in the Competition.