



College of
**Business &
Social Sciences**



2026 COMPETITION GUIDE

<https://www.ulm.edu/newventureschallenge/>

The University of Louisiana Monroe College of Business and Social Sciences, in partnership with EAP, developed the Warhawk New Ventures Challenge to:

- Promote and support college students in their entrepreneurial endeavors and new venture creations
- Encourage commercialization of promising ideas emerging from ULM
- Build bridges between ULM students, ULM itself, and the NELA entrepreneurial community
- Incentivize and assist student preparation for state and national level business plan and pitch competitions like the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup. <https://www.ulm.edu/pelicancup/>

The competition is open only to undergraduate and graduate ULM students registered in Fall 2026 classes, regardless of major or field of study. Students from other universities, ULM alumni, staff, faculty, or professionals are not eligible.

Overview

The Warhawk New Ventures Challenge is a Northeast Louisiana entrepreneurial and business development event. The competition's main goal is to provide opportunities for real-world entrepreneurship education and innovation commercialization in our NELA region, and help students prepare for larger competitions such as the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup.

This initiative is sponsored by the Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP), which is a division of BRF. EAP's mission is to develop the entrepreneurial eco-system in North Louisiana. All events will be held at the University of Louisiana Monroe Campus.

Why Participate?

Student participants will have opportunities to receive coaching from industry experts and build

camaraderie with other entrepreneurially minded individuals.

If you have an idea for a product, service, or new technology that could be transformed into a scalable business, we highly recommend you apply. Apart from sharpening your business and financial acumen, the competition will also provide:

- A chance to win cash prizes that you may use any way you see fit including investing into your startup
- Learn to think like a boss via real world experience in the startup and capital raising process
- Build your networking and business collaboration skills with industry experts and seasoned entrepreneurs
- Develop soft and hard skills that make you more appealing in the job marketplace
- Learn what it takes to be a business winner
- Get valuable feedback and experience to be more competitive in other business plan and pitch competitions

Cash Prizes

The top 3 finalists will be awarded cash prizes.

- **1st Place (Winner) - \$3,000**
- **2nd Place (Runner up) - \$1,000**
- **3rd Place (Runner up) - \$500**

The **Elevator Pitch Competition Winner** will also be awarded:

- **\$250**

Policies

Application Fees

\$0 – FREE. There are no application fees.

Eligibility & Student Enrollment at ULM Requirements

Registrants and all team members must be currently enrolled as a student at ULM in the Fall 2026 semester – full semester, online, Fall I, or Fall II. All team registrants must provide their ULM email address and Campus Wide Identification (CWID) number in the Initial Application and Final Deliverables Package submission for eligibility verification purposes. Other information will be requested for grant reporting purposes.

Team Size

ULM students must apply as teams of 2 to 4 students. Ideally, teams should consist of at least two students from different academic disciplines. Teams with wide skill-sets tend to do better in business plan competitions. Though it is not required, we do recommend that at least one person on the team be a business major or have some business experience.

Business Idea Originality

Teams may compete with a student-generated idea or one that originated from another individual or entity. This includes:

- Licensing technologies from universities or research labs is encouraged if they have not been commercialized previously.
- An idea based on a technology, product, or service that has been licensed from another company, private inventor, or other source. Teams must provide written and signed approval from these individuals or entities on professional letterhead.

Business Ideas that are not eligible include:

- Ventures that include proposals for buy-outs and/or expansions of existing companies, roll-ups, real estate syndications, tax shelters, franchises, licensing agreements for distribution outside of Louisiana, spin-outs from existing corporations, and other consulting projects or analyses are not eligible.

Additionally, previous efforts to establish the business or participating in business-like activities which include but are not limited to the following:

- attempts to raise capital, developing and presenting the business plan to potential investors, and conducting substantial market research outside of the 2025-2026 academic year MAY be disqualified.
- This includes business plans that were submitted in previous competitions.
- Previous competition entry and winnings are required to be disclosed at Final Deliverables Submission

The business should not have received more than \$50,000 in equity-related capital (such as seed capital or institutional funding) or generated more than \$25,000 in gross revenue prior to the current academic year. Revenue generated during a test-marketing project may be excluded from this provision.

Revenue streams from the business should not be based solely on deriving revenues from the licensing of its own technologies

Equity Rights

The College of Business and Social Sciences, the University of Louisiana Monroe, and EAP to do not make any claims of equity rights or ownership of the proposed New Ventures Challenge student businesses.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

Judges, reviewers, staff, volunteers, the audience, faculty, and/or any other third party either directly or indirectly connected to the Warhawk New Ventures Challenge shall not be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement of any kind.

If there are any intellectual property concerns, students and/or teams should consult with their attorney and legal representation regarding intellectual property prior to participating in the competition. Legal services shall not and will not be provided by ULM or the College of Business and Social Sciences.

Student/Team Attendance

Information Sessions and Applicant Workshop Attendance

It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED but not required students attend the Information Sessions and Business Development Workshop. Attendees of the Information Sessions and Business Development Workshop will gain important insights and information about the competition, expectations, and have many of their questions answered.

Finalist Workshop Attendance

If selected a finalist, at least one person on the team must attend the Finalist Workshop, but it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED all persons on the team attend.

Final Pitch Competition and New Ventures Challenge Elevator Pitch and Awards Ceremony Attendance

Finalists Teams are **ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED** to attend all of the events of November 12, 2026. If your team is named a finalist, and cannot confirm attendance to the Final Pitch Competition prior to 4:30 PM on Tuesday, November 10, your team may be disqualified. If so, an alternate team *may* be announced to fill the team's anticipated absence.

Key Dates and Events

Date	Event	Time	Location
September 10, 2026	Information Session 1 – Formal Presentation	9:30 – 10:00 AM	Hemphill Hall 124
	Information Session 2 – Casual Walk Up	10:15 AM – 11:15 AM	Hemphill Hall Lobby
	Information Session 3 – Casual Walk Up	11:45 AM – 12:30 PM	The HUB – Outside Starbucks
September 20, 2026	Early Registration Applications Due	Due at 11:59 PM	New Ventures Challenge Website
September 21, 2026	Invitations to Early Applicant Workshop Emailed	Morning	Via Email
September 24, 2026	Early Applicant Workshop	9:30 -10:45 AM	Hemphill Hall 124
October 1, 2026	Late Registration Applications Due	11:59 PM	New Ventures Challenge Website
October 19, 2026	Final Deliverables Package	Due at 11:59 PM	New Ventures Challenge Website
October 26, 2026	Finalists Announced	12:00 Noon	College of Business and Social Sciences Facebook Page
November 3, 2026	Finalist Workshop – Finalists Only	9:30 -10:45 AM	Hemphill Hall 124
November 10, 2026	Revised Deliverables Package and PowerPoint Pitch Slide Deck – Finalists Only	11:59 PM	newventureschallenge@ulm.edu
November 12, 2026	Final Pitch Competition – Open to Public	9:00 to 11:30 AM	The Terrace
	Elevator Pitch Competition and Awards Ceremony	1:00 PM to 2:00 PM	The Terrace

Event and Deliverable Descriptions

- **Information Session 1:** This will be a formal presentation of the New Ventures Challenge requirements held in Hemphill Hall Room 124 at 9:30 AM on Sept. 10, 2026. Topics will include expectations and aspects of the Warhawk New Ventures Challenge such as key dates and events, rules, eligibility, and other information, insights, and tips on how to successfully compete.

- **Information Session 2:** This will be an informal and casual walk-up table set up in the lobby of Hemphill Hall from 10:15 to 11:15 AM on Sept. 10, 2026. General information about the competition will be discussed and given to interested parties.
- **Information Session 3:** This will be an informal and casual walk-up table set up outside of the HUB from 11:45 AM to 12:30 PM on Sept. 10, 2026. General information about the competition will be discussed and given to interested parties.
- **Early Registration Application: Due at 11:59 PM, September 20, 2026.** By filling out the online application on the New Ventures Challenge Website (<https://www.ulm.edu/newventureschallenge/>), student teams are committing to compete fairly and within the rules of the New Ventures Challenge Competition Guide. Teams will provide the names, email addresses, and campus wide ID (CWID) numbers of each team member, as well as a brief 2 to 6 sentence description of their business idea and the business problem or opportunity it addresses. Late applications will be accepted until October 1, 2026, but those applicants will not be invited to the Applicant Workshop below.
- **Applicant Workshop:** This workshop is by invitation only and the opportunity to attend will only be extended to teams who turn in their applications by the 11:59 PM deadline on September 20. The workshop will be presented by EAP staff and ULM faculty. The focus will be on how to complete the key aspects of the Final Submission Package which includes:
 - 1) One-Page Executive Summary
 - 2) One-Page Business Plan (Lean Canvas)
 - 3) One-Page Financial Summary
 - 4) Eight-to-Ten Slide Pitch-Deck PresentationTemplates will be provided for each of the four elements.
- **Late Registration Applications:** Due at 11:59 PM, Thursday, October 1, 2026.
- **Final Deliverables Package: due by 11:59 PM on Monday, October 19, 2026.** Packages will be emailed to newventureschallenge@ulm.edu or, if available, uploaded to the Submissions Link on the website: <https://www.ulm.edu/newventureschallenge/>

Only ONE deliverables package submission per team.

Please be aware, the submission process will take time and require students to submit the name, warhawks.ulm.edu email address, and CWID numbers for each team member for eligibility verification purposes. Be sure to start the submission well before the deadline.

The Deliverables Package will require ONE .pdf file be submitted containing the following and in order:

- One-Page Executive Summary
- One-Page Business Plan (Lean Canvas)
- One-Page Financial Summary.
- A .pdf version of an Eight-to-Ten Slide Pitch Deck

File naming conventions will be given on the New Ventures Challenge Website.

The packages will be assigned to and evaluated by a group of distinguished and qualified reviewers.

The reviewers will name the top 3 to 5 finalists, and suggest 0 to 3 alternates.

- **Finalists Announcement:** Finalists will be announced on the College of Business and Social Sciences Facebook page at 11:00 AM on Friday, October 26, 2026. Finalists will be listed on the New Ventures Challenge Webpage thereafter.
- **Alternates contacted:** At their discretion and based on the recommendations of the reviewers, the New Ventures Challenge Committee may choose to contact zero to three alternate teams. These alternate teams may be elevated to finalist status if any of the named Finalist Teams are disqualified or are unable to meet requirements of attendance for the Finalist Workshop and Final Pitch Competition. Elevation is not automatic. Alternative teams will not be announced publicly, but contacted privately shortly after the Finalists Announcement on October 26, 2025.
- **Finalist Workshop:** This workshop is reserved for the finalists and possible alternates. EAP Analysts, experts, and ULM staff will provide further business model development, financial analysis training, and presentation (pitch) coaching. The main focus will be to provide insights, strategies, and advice on successful approaches to the Final Pitch Competition. The workshop will occur on Tuesday, November 3 at 9:30 AM in Hemphill Hall 124.
- **Revised Deliverables Package and PowerPoint Pitch Slide Deck – Finalists Only:**
The finalist teams shall submit revised deliverables packages and PowerPoint slide deck presentations to newventureschallenge@ulm.edu by 11:59 PM on November 10, 2026.

Each finalist team will submit **THREE** files total.

- A .pdf file of the Revised Executive Summary, Lean Canvas, and Financial Statements
- A .pdf file of the Revised Pitch Deck Presentation
- A Microsoft PowerPoint Pitch Deck file with either a .ppt or .pptx file suffix for use in the Pitch Competition Presentations. No other formats will be accepted.

File naming conventions will be given on the New Ventures Challenge Website.

There shall be no team-initiated modifications to the Revised Finalist Submission Package after the 11:59 PM, November 10, 2026 due date. However, the New Ventures Committee may request changes to the PowerPoint Slide Decks if compatibility or technical issues arise. The Microsoft PowerPoint files will be uploaded to a single laptop computer all teams will use during the competition.

The .pdf file elements of the Revised Deliverables Package will be printed and given to the Final Pitch Competition Judges the morning of November 12, 2026.

If a team fails to submit a Microsoft PowerPoint .ppt or .pptx file, the team will be subject to disqualification.

If a team elects not to, or fails to submit pdf files of the Revised Deliverables Package, the team's original deliverables package will be presented to the judges so long as a PowerPoint Slide Deck is submitted.

- **Final Pitch Competition:** Beginning at 9:00 AM on the morning of November 12, 2026, finalist teams

will present their formal business pitches to a panel of judges. Each pitch will be allotted a total of 20 minutes – approximately 1-2 minutes of introduction, 8-12 minutes of presentation, and 8-12 minutes of judges questioning. Presentations will be held in the Banquet Hall of the 7th Floor Library Terrace.

Professional business attire is expected of all team members.

The Final Pitch Competition presentations are open to the public and students of ULM. However, to preserve fairness finalist teams may not be present during the presentations of any other finalist teams. Finalist teams will arrive 30 minutes before their assigned time slot, check in, and be sequestered outside of the Banquet Hall of the 7th floor of the Library Terrace.

The time slots at which each business pitch presentation will begin are as follows:

- 9:00 AM
- 9:30 AM
- 10:00 AM
- 10:30 AM
- 11:00 AM

To further preserve fairness, interruptions, and objectional or non-professional behavior will not be tolerated.

Ushers will be stationed in the Banquet Hall and the doors of the Banquet Hall. Once a Final Pitch Presentation begins, the Hall doors will be closed and no one will be allowed to enter the room except for specifically designated staff and faculty members.

- **Warhawk New Ventures Challenges Elevator Pitch Competition and Awards Ceremony:** 1:00 PM, November 12, 2026 in the Terrace Banquet Hall.

Elevator Pitch Competition: Each finalist team shall select one member to give a 90-second 'Elevator Pitch' of the team's business to the audience. The audience, judges, and/or staff of the ceremony will vote on the winner. The winner of the Elevator Pitch Competition will receive \$250.

Awards Ceremony: Finally, the First, Second, and Third places winners of the 2026 Warhawk New Ventures Challenge will be announced and prizes awarded. Prize amounts are listed above.

Winners are expected to remain in the Terrace after the ceremony and cooperate with the Warhawk New Ventures Challenge Committee and ULM staff for photographs, interviews, and other promotional efforts that celebrate the winner's accomplishments and promote the Warhawk New Ventures Challenge to future ULM students!