



2026 Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup Competition Guide

Founded by: Dhu C. Thompson

Established by:



ulm.edu/pelcancup

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Overview

The University of Louisiana Monroe in partnership with Dhu Thompson developed the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup to:

- promote and support college students in their entrepreneurial endeavors and new venture creation;
- encourage commercialization of promising ideas emerging from colleges and universities;
- build bridges between the collegiate institutions and the entrepreneurial community; and,
- become one of the premier business plan competitions in the United States.

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is a real-world entrepreneur education opportunity for college students. Whether they are serious about launching a startup, or they want to learn more about entrepreneurship, competitors will gain a greater appreciation of the challenges and opportunities of starting a viable business.

Competitors will also have access to networks of entrepreneurs, economic developers, investors, and others as they move through the process. The rigor of the competition sharpens their critical-thinking, teambuilding, presentation, and other soft skills – all important to career success.

There is no cost to enter the competition. Teams are not required to launch their businesses to compete. Winning teams are not required to spend cash prizes on their businesses. Students and their faculty advisors are rewarded for the rigorous work accomplished throughout all phases of the competition.

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup will offer one of the largest all-cash prize pools of any collegiate business competition in the country. The 2026 cash prize pool is \$157,000, thanks to the generosity and partnership of Sponsor Dhu C. Thompson, founder and retired CEO of Delta Plastics.

Mr. Thompson is a distinguished ULM Alumnus and founder, past owner, and former chairman of the board for Delta Plastics, producer of agricultural irrigation tubing and the largest recycler of plastics in the state of Arkansas. He is also former owner and past chairman of the board for Revolution Bag, that manufactures EPA compliant trash can liners. Previous awards include 2004 Arkansas Business Executive of the Year and SBA Person of the Year. In 2019 he sold the Revolution brands to a New York private equity firm, and now focuses on entrepreneurship growth in Arkansas and Louisiana.

2026 General Info

Divisions:

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup will host two divisions in 2026! An undergraduate student division and a graduate student division.

BOTH DIVISIONS WILL INCLUDE SMALL BUSINESS/LIFESTYLES AND HIGH GROWTH/TECHNOLOGY TRACKS:

Both divisions will accept business plans with truly unique ideas and technologies that demonstrate a potentially disruptive market impact with strong viability and high potential for growth. The proposed business could be for ventures related, but not limited to, agriculture, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, transportation, energy, conservation, gaming, etc.

Both divisions are also inclusive of business plans that are more “Main Street,” customer-facing operations, such as retail and hospitality ventures, as well as services in industries related to automotive, household, construction, beauty, travel/tourism, etc.

The best business ideas will continue to be those that:

- improve or replace business processes to increase efficiency and productivity, or enable the business to extend the range or quality of existing products and/or services;
- develop entirely new and improved products and services – often to meet rapidly changing customer or consumer demands or needs;
- add value to existing products, services, or markets to differentiate the business from its competitors and increase the perceived value to customers/target markets.

Teams must compete in the undergraduate or graduate division, but not both. See “Rules” for more details regarding eligibility as they have changed this year.

Business plan contents will be as instructed in “Business Plan Content Requirements.”

Awards

The cash prize pool of \$61,000 for undergraduate entries and \$96,000 for graduate entries can be spent at the discretion of the winning team members and faculty advisors.

This stipulation is unique to most competitions in that the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup does not require winning teams to start their businesses. The intent of the Pelican Cup is to be a real-world and rigorous

entrepreneur education experience for college students. The cash prizes reward team members and their advisors for their accomplishment and hard work.

UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION PRIZES:

First Place	\$25,000
Second Place	\$15,000
Third Place	\$10,000

Advisor Awards:

\$3,000 to winning team advisors- First, Second, and Third Place.

Elevator Pitch Winner:

\$2,000 to winner

GRADUATE DIVISION PRIZES:

First Place	\$50,000
Second Place	\$25,000
Third Place	\$10,000

Advisor Awards:

\$3,000 to winning team advisors- First, Second, and Third Place.

Elevator Pitch Winner:

\$2,000 to winner

All winning team members and their advisors will also receive certificates/plaques and their schools will receive trophies.

Elements of the Competition

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is composed of three elements for both divisions:

- Round 1: Team application and submission of written business plan; judging and selection of up to six finalists.
- Round 2: Finalists oral presentations to judges; selection of top three winners.
- Elevator Pitch Competition and Awards Presentation: One representative of the 6 finalist teams is eligible to compete for a chance to make a :90 pitch during the awards presentation before the competition winners are announced. The finalist pool of 6 contestants for each division **may be** asked to compete in a “pitch-off” for the right to compete on the finals stage for \$2,000.

Dates for Both Divisions

December 1 – 8:00 a.m.

- Team application window opens online in [YouNoodle](#)

January 16 – 11:59 p.m.

- Business plans due and applications close

January 17

- Round 1 begins; written plans assigned to judges via YouNoodle for scoring and feedback

February 17-19

- Round 1 judges' group deliberations

February 20 – Noon

- Announcement of finalists (6 undergraduate teams and 6 graduate teams) at ulm.edu/pelcancup and livestreamed via Facebook
- Round 1 judges' feedback forwarded to finalist teams' leaders and advisors within 72 hours

March 8 – 11:59 p.m.

- Revised business plans due from both divisions' finalists via YouNoodle

March 9

- Pitch Competition Competitor Name due to Cathi Hemed by 11:59 p.m.
- Team member and advisor tax forms due to Cathi Hemed by 11:59 p.m.

March 25 – All Day- Undergraduate and Graduate Divisions

- Finalist oral presentations at The University of Louisiana Monroe
- Judges' deliberations to determine first, second, and third place winners for each division

March 26 – 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

- Awards Presentation with Elevator Pitch competition for division finalists, followed by announcement of winners

Rules

ULM is responsible for management and operation of the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup.

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is designed to increase college and university student appreciation for the challenges associated with developing a viable business offering (product or service) while, through an iterative process, recognizing those students best able to articulate a plan that addresses these challenges.

Not every circumstance can be anticipated during the competition. The executive committee reserves the right to disqualify any team that violates the rules, guidelines, and the spirit of the competition.

The executive committee also reserves the right to disqualify teams that engage in illegal, unethical, harmful, or any other behavior and activities it deems as unworthy of association with the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup.

ULM will not guarantee internet quality, speed of service, and quality of connectivity at any time. ULM will also not guarantee that video, sound clips, fonts, or other electronic aids will work and/or display at full capacity at any time.

All decisions made by the executive committee during any process of the competition are final.

Eligibility:

1. The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is open to any full- or part-time, certificate- or degree-seeking student currently enrolled in a 4-year college or university in the state of Louisiana.
2. Current enrollment is defined as enrollment in a certificate- or degree-seeking program of study during the summer/fall 2025, and/or 2026 spring semesters.
3. Students who graduated with a certificate or degree during the 2025 summer/fall semesters are eligible to compete.

Team Composition, Team Leader, and Advisor/s:

4. UNDERGRADUATE Teams may be composed of:
 - undergraduate students of the above-named higher education institutions.
 - no team member may have any credits earned in graduate classes.
 - if a member is accepted and enrolled in graduate courses for spring 2026, even if they have not started or completed coursework by the date of the competition, they must compete in the graduate division.

- If a member is accepted and enrolled in graduate courses for summer 2026 or later, they are allowed to compete in the undergraduate division, so long as they meet all above requirements.
 - students from any academic discipline – agriculture, business, education, engineering, health, science, tourism, etc.
 - team members may represent a mix of these disciplines
 - students from more than one college and/or university- but must submit a notice to the executive committee prior to the application close date.
5. GRADUATE Teams may be composed of:
 - graduate and undergraduate students of the above-named higher education institutions.
 - at least one member must be enrolled or have earned graduate credit as of spring 2026 to compete in the graduate division.
 - students from any academic discipline – agriculture, business, education, engineering, health, science, tourism, etc.
 - team members may represent a mix of these disciplines
 - students from more than one college and/or university- but must submit a request to the executive committee prior to the application close date.
 6. Teams may include non-student members. However, these individuals cannot make up the majority of the team and cannot take part in any team presentations.
 7. Team size is limited to a maximum of six students and a minimum of three.
 8. Students **cannot** compete on more than one team in either division. No student can compete in both divisions during a single competition year.
 9. Teams/students **cannot** enter more than one business plan into the competition that year.
 10. Students must have majority ownership of the business venture and serve in “C-Level” roles on the management team (i.e., CEO, COO, CFO, CPO, etc.). The management team outlined in the plan must include the names of individuals (if any) who are not associated with the college or university.
 11. The student management team and other individuals (if applicable) must own at least 30 percent of the total equity in the business venture, if allocated.
 12. Each team must designate one student member as the team leader.
 13. Each team must have at least one faculty member as its primary advisor. In addition to that, non-faculty advisors may be allowed with prior approval from the executive committee by the application deadline.

14. Teams may have more than one advisor, but must identify a primary advisor.
15. Faculty advisors can work with/advise/compete with as many teams as they wish.
16. The team leader and the primary advisor will be the only points of contact between the team and the Pelican Cup staff throughout all phases of the competition.
17. The team leader is responsible for creating and managing the team's application and subsequent uploads in the competition database, [YouNoodle](#). Managing includes ensuring data entry and required uploads are correct and complete, instructions are followed, and deadlines are met. Team leaders are to add the primary advisor as an administrator to the team's account.
18. The advisor's role is to mentor the team leader and team members during all phases of the competition. Advisors cannot be part of team presentations. Advisors must understand they also represent the team's higher education institution and academic standards expected of that institution.
19. The team leader and advisor are **REQUIRED** to affirm eligibility of each team member. Affirmation may include:
 - a. verification in the application that team members are full- or part-time students currently enrolled in a certificate- or degree-seeking program of study during the eligible semesters; and,
 - b. verification in the application of each team member's level of completion as of the business plan submission date (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, recently graduated, graduate or post-graduate student).

The executive committee has the right to request further information to determine validity of enrollment and to make determinations accordingly. The executive committee's determinations are final. All teams are encouraged to check with their higher education institution regarding academic penalties for eligibility or rules violations.

Business Idea:

20. Teams may compete with a student-generated idea or one that originated from another individual or entity.
 - a. Licensing technologies from universities or research labs is encouraged if they have not been commercialized previously.
 - b. Teams may also compete with 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. Teams will be required to upload this document with their business plan in Round 1.

21. 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**.
22. 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 in YouNoodle and/or directly to the Pelican Cup staff.
23. The business should not have received more than **\$200,000** in equity-related capital (such as seed capital or institutional funding) or generated more than **\$100,000** in gross revenue prior to the current academic year. Revenue generated during a test-marketing project may be excluded from this provision.
24. Revenue streams from the business should not be based solely on deriving revenues from the licensing of its own technologies.

Business Plan:

25. Because the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is a collegiate academic competition, the creation and development of the business plan must be the original work of the students.
26. The work of the team may be under faculty supervision for credit in a regularly scheduled course or as an independent study. Their work may also be prepared under faculty supervision with no official credit.
27. Plans may not contain fabricated information about (but not limited to) the following: backgrounds, experience, and educational levels of members of the management team; stage of product development, product performance claims, or market survey results.

For example, if a team builds a business plan upon an idea from an outside person or entity, the team cannot take material or information (such as market and competitive analysis, financials, operating strategies, etc.) from that person or entity for use in their business plan.

By submitting a plan into the competition, the team automatically affirms these requirements. Teams submitting business plans with any plagiarized and/or fabricated information may be disqualified.

Disclosure:

28. The author(s) will retain all rights to the plan regarding its use at all times prior to and following the competition, except as stated elsewhere in these rules.
29. Teams **are solely responsible** for protection of intellectual property rights, such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, etc., for their concepts.
30. By entering the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup, teams understand their idea has been publicly disclosed. Pelican Cup staff will not ask judges, reviewers, sponsors, staff, audience members, or any other individuals involved with the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup to agree to sign non-disclosure or confidentiality statements.
31. Teams agree that neither Pelican Cup staff, ULM, nor its affiliates or subsidiaries, nor members of the judging panels, nor sponsors and their designated organizations, assume any liability for any disclosures of any information related to their submissions, which may be made, whether inadvertently or otherwise, by any judge, reviewer, staff member, audience member, or other individual connected with, participating in, viewing, hearing, or receiving information during the competition.

Media:

32. By entering the competition, students and advisors agree to allow ULM, its affiliates, and other designated organizations the unlimited right to videotape, photograph, audiotape, transcribe, or otherwise record all elements of the competition; including, but not limited to, oral presentations.
33. Competitors also agree that ULM, its affiliates, and other designated organizations may use videos, photos, transcripts, and/or recording(s) (in whole or part) for publicity and marketing purposes as their organizations may see fit, including those which may result in remuneration. Any institution participating must request permission before using any of the above for marketing purposes.

Required Attendance:

34. Teams that qualify for the oral finals are required to attend the oral final presentation in person with a 66% or more majority of their team. Failure to do so will forfeit eligibility and winnings. Please note the required date of the oral finals prior to entering the competition.
35. Teams are required to attend the Awards Luncheon with a 66% or more majority of their team and their faculty advisor(s). If a faculty advisor is unable to attend, a representative from the competing university

must be in attendance and act on the advisor's behalf. Failure to attend the awards luncheon will forfeit eligibility and winnings. Please note the required date of attendance of the Awards Luncheon prior to entering the competition.

Rules Violations:

For matters related to possible rules violations, inquiries must be submitted in writing to the executive committee and must include:

- the name of the team alleging the violation,
- the name/s of the team/s allegedly committing the violation,
- the rule/s purported to have been violated,
- supporting evidence that the rule/s have been violated.

Inquiries will be forwarded to the executive committee, which will determine if rules have been violated, as well as if and how a team and/or team member/s should be penalized or disqualified. The decision of the executive committee is final.

Questions/Assistance:

Please contact Cathi Hemed at ULM, phone: 318-342-1151, email: hemed@ulm.edu.

Business Plan Content Requirements

General Requirements:

Plans are limited to a maximum of 12 pages plus a maximum of 6 pages for appendices.

A Cover Page and Table of Contents are required and do not count toward the business plan page limit.

Plans with fewer than 6 pages of appendices may not use the extra pages to increase the length of their business plan beyond the 12-page limit.

Appendices should support findings and financials noted in the plan.

Formatting:

- The font must be Arial, Helvetica, or Times New Roman. This requirement does not apply to text for the Cover Page or to headings or descriptions in the plan that accompany pictures, graphics, or worksheets.
- The font must be 12 point.
- Page margins must be one inch on all sides.
- Line spacing must be 1.5.
- Pages must be numbered.

Contents:

I. Cover Page – provide:

- the name of the business idea;
- the name of the team leader;
- the name/s of team members; and,
- the name/s of advisors.

II. Table of Contents

III. Executive Summary (10 points)

- Provide a one-sentence description of the business idea's product or service.
- Whether it's for a new product or service, improving a current product or service in the marketplace, or expansion of an existing product or service business, summarize why your idea will be better than what currently exists, specifying key benefits and target markets.
- Conclude with a general summary of your company's goals for the next three years.

IV. Problem (10 points)

- What is the unfulfilled need/problem in the marketplace?
- Have there been prior approaches to solving this need/problem? Explain. If yes, what were their shortcomings?

V. Solution – Product/Service (10 points)

- Describe the product or service that is your solution.
- What are the key features and benefits?
- What is its current stage of development?
- What is the unique value proposition for the customer?

VI. Customers and Validation of Business Idea and Venture (10 points)

- Who are your customers? Give specifics re: demographics, income levels, etc.
- What assumptions were made leading the team to conclude there is market acceptance for your product or service and that you will generate revenue?
- What activities (interviews, surveys, presentations, prototyping, tests, etc.) did your team conduct with potential customers to validate these assumptions?
- Were your assumptions on target based on the results and feedback from these activities?
 - If yes, explain.
 - If no, how did your team pivot? What strategies were changed and why?
- What did you learn from this validation process?

VII. Go to Market Strategies (10 points)

Addresses the research and development, production, marketing, and personnel needed to execute the idea.

- How will you make and/or deliver the product or service?
- How will you promote and market your product or service?
- Who will be your key partners?

VIII. Management Team (10 points)

- List the student team members who will hold the “C-Suite” positions in the company and provide a brief background on each.
- Explain why this team is the right team to execute the idea.

IX. Revenue (5 points)

- What are your sources of revenue?
- How do you anticipate generating enough revenue and profits to be viable?

X. Competitive Environment (5 points)

- Who are your competitors?
- What is your idea’s competitive advantage?

XI. Critical Risks (5 points)

- What are major internal and external risks that could threaten the idea?
- What viable contingencies does the team have to address these risks?

XII. Funds Required (5 points)

- Provide a statement including the amount and type of capital needed, when it is needed, and how it will be used.

XIII. Pro-Forma Financials – Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement (10 points)

- Provide monthly projections for the first year and annual projections for years two and three for each document.

XIV. Quality of Plan – (10 points, Round 1)

- The plan is well-written (concise, correct grammar / punctuation, sentence construction); instructions are followed as outlined in the plan requirements.

Team Applications

The YouNoodle competition database will be used for team applications and uploads.

YouNoodle is a third-party website. Team leaders should read its [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Because the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup is exclusive to the above-named college and university students, the competition is not publicly posted on YouNoodle. Going to “younoodle.com” or another generic link will not work. Please use this specific link to enter: [YouNoodle 2026 Team Application](#).

The registration window opens on YouNoodle at 8:00 a.m. Monday, December 1st.

Creating Team Accounts:

As stated in Rule 17, the team leader is responsible for creating the team account in YouNoodle and ensuring application information and uploads are correct and complete.

Team leaders must ensure the email address they use to set up their team’s account will accept emails from support@younoodle.com or from any other @younoodle.com address. YouNoodle will auto-generate an email regarding the status of account activity each time an update is made.

Click on the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup Link:

[2026 Pelican Cup Application](#)

and follow the prompts to create the account. When done, click “Create account,”. After the account is created and you can see your dashboard, click on “Create a new application” to access the application form.

Team leaders with existing accounts in YouNoodle, whether for a previous Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup or for another competition should be able to log in at the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup link with their existing credentials.

After the application is created, go to the Team Management tab. This is where you will add your primary advisor as the other administrator for the team account, as required in the rules. **Please ensure first that his/her email account will also accept emails from any @younoodle.com domain.**

The primary advisor will also receive email updates from YouNoodle. Please whitelist the domain @younoodle.com to ensure delivery.

Editing Team Applications:

If information is still unknown or incomplete at the time the team leader starts the application, the fields can be left blank or populated generically.

The phone number required of both the team leader and the primary advisor is crucial. Should the team make the finals, and especially if there are technical issues, these numbers should be ones where they can be reached quickly.

Note: Applications are considered incomplete until the business plan is uploaded. This is fine until the deadline to submit the business plan. Do not forget to hit the SUBMIT button and look for confirmation of submission. If you are unsure, reach out to Cathi Hemed at any time to determine submission status.

Team leaders can update applications anytime 24/7 until applications close.

To make edits and updates, team leaders need to log into the YouNoodle account, then click on “Dashboard” at the top of the column on the left side of the page. On the right side, click the application’s box to access it. Once team leaders enter their application, they should click on “Application Form” on the left side menu and proceed, saving changes as prompted.

Applications Open December 1st, 8:00 a.m.

Teams that intend to compete in the Pelican Cup can start their YouNoodle applications at 8:00 a.m. December 1 and we encourage them to not wait until the final deadline.

Teams are not required to have their applications **completed** at this time. For applications to get created, only the school name, the division selection, and a summary of the idea are needed.

For questions, Pelican Cup staff will reach out to the team leader and primary advisor for discussion. Applications not submitted are not binding. A team may enter the competition anytime up until the application deadline.

Submitting the Business Plan – Deadline January 16, 11:59 p.m.

- Teams need to ensure their YouNoodle application information is current and complete before uploading the business plan, as instructed in the application, and submitting their entries by clicking on “Submit” at the bottom of the Checklist page.
- Plans must be converted to PDF before uploading.
- The plan’s file name must be the same as the team name, for example, “(name of team).pdf.”
- The PDF file size is limited to 10 MB. YouNoodle will not allow uploads of files beyond this limit.
- Teams should ensure all photos, graphics, etc. in the plan convert properly before uploading!

Competition Rounds and Judging- Both Divisions

There are two rounds to the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup:

- Round 1 – Written Judging
- Round 2 – Oral Presentations – 6 finalist teams selected from Round 1

A different team of judges is recruited for each round.

Round 1 (Written) – Judging Window January 17- February 16

Round 1 (Written)- Judges Deliberations February 17-19

Finalists Announcement- February 20

The judges' pool for Round 1 is divided into groups for each division – 6 groups are expected but subject to number of submissions. There will be at least three and no more than six judges per group.

In this round, there are two phases. First, judges will review and score plans independently in YouNoodle. The scoring rubric and points are the same as noted in "Business Plan Contents." Judges are also asked to leave feedback. When finished, they are to note the top two teams they would select to advance to Round 2 as finalists and a third team as an alternate.

In phase two, judges will convene virtually by group for deliberations. Judges will share his/her top two teams and alternate selections. Judges will then deliberate to select the group's two finalist teams and the alternate team.

The six finalists will be announced at noon February 20 via social media stream and posted on the Pelican Cup website. Chosen finalist teams will be contacted immediately afterward for next steps.

Following the finalist announcement, Pelican Cup staff will email feedback from Round 1 judges to all team leaders and primary advisors.

Round 2- Finalist Oral Presentations and Deliberations March 25

Revised Business Plan:

The business plan content requirements for Round 2 will not change. Finalists may choose to use Round 1 feedback to update their business plans for Round 2 judges into the team's YouNoodle application by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, March 8. If no plan is uploaded into this section, the plan submitted for Round 1 will be the plan forwarded to Round 2 judges.

At least three and no more than seven new judges are recruited for Round 2.

Plans and the rubric below will be forwarded to all Round 2 judges in advance of finals.

Presentation Tracks:

For Round 2, there will be six finalist presentations. Teams will present throughout the day. Majority attendance is required of the finalist teams.

All presentations will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 4:00 p.m., followed by judges' deliberations.

Presentation Time and Breakdown:

Presentations are 50 minutes. A staff member from ULM will be assigned as timekeeper.

5 minutes	Begin setup of teams and judges; judges provide a welcome and introductions. Presentations may begin when teams and judges are ready.
20 minutes	Team presentation. The timekeeper will alert the team when five minutes and one minute remains in the formal presentation. If a presentation is finished before the 20-minute time limit, judges may proceed with the rest of the presentation schedule.
15 minutes	Q & A – teams are encouraged to anticipate judges' questions and have slides or other visuals prepared to supplement their responses.
10 minutes	Informal Q & A with judges, presentation closes.

It is not unusual for presentations to end before the 50-minute time limit. ***However, teams are highly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to visit with judges and ask questions, seek advice, etc. during the informal Q & A period.***

Presentation Guidelines:

- All presentations will be conducted live on campus at ULM. Locations will be specified closer to the date.
- Professional business attire is expected.

Presentation Content and Scoring Rubric

Finalists should prepare and present their presentations in the following order:

- **Begin the presentation** with a brief opening statement that includes an introduction of the members, a description of their product or service, and how it addresses the need in the marketplace. Conclude with a summary of the company's goals for the next three years.
(Aligns with the "Executive Summary" in the business plan requirements.)
- **Value (15 Points):** The problem and solution statement are clear – the team has identified the unmet need in the marketplace. Whether it's for a new product or service, improving a current product or service in the marketplace, or expansion of an existing product or service business, make a strong case that

their idea addresses the problem, has a distinct competitive advantage, a unique value for customers, and can be sustainable.

(Aligns with “Problem, Solution, Competitive Environment” in business plan requirements.)

- **Validation (20 Points)** – The team explains the assumptions to show there will be market acceptance for their idea and that it will be profitable. The team gives strong evidence that they tested those assumptions with customers through discovery and validation processes. They discuss the milestones achieved during this process to validate market acceptance and profitability. Team members also point out lessons learned, comparing their initial assumptions to what they actually discovered during this validation process. They also identify major internal and external risks they’ve discovered that could threaten the venture and the contingencies they’ve devised to address them.

(Aligns with “Customers and Validation of Business Idea and Venture” and “Critical Risks” in business plan requirements.)

- **Go to Market Strategies and Revenue (20 Points):** The team explains the research and development, personnel, key partners (including team members who are not students, if applicable), production, marketing and distribution channels, sales, and other key strategies that need to be implemented. The team also states the anticipated sources and streams of revenue and how they expect to generate enough revenue and profit for a viable business. This section needs to also highlight the Marketing Plan of the business.

(Aligns with “Go to Market Strategies” and “Revenue” in business plan requirements.)

- **Management Team (15 Points)** – The venture is led by the student team members. The students tell which executive management (“C-Suite”) positions they hold in the company and why. The team explains why they are the right team to execute the venture.

(Aligns with “Management Team” in business plan requirements.)

- **Funds Required and Pro Forma Financials (15 Points)** – The team states the amount/s and type/s of capital needed for the business, when it is needed, and how it will be used. The team also present and explain their income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement; each will have monthly projections for the first year and annual projections for years two and three. This section needs to also highlight the anticipated investment in marketing of the business.

(Aligns with “Funds Required” and “Pro-Forma Financials” in business plan requirements.)

- **Offering and Exit Strategy (5 Points)** – Clearly articulates a proposal and terms to investors, identifies what is being sought from investors, states how much equity will be given up in return for investment capital, presents a realistic assessment of ROI potential, presents an appropriate deal structure and possible exit scenarios.

Note: The Offering and Exit Strategy is not required in the business plan – they are to be included only during the presentation.

- **Quality of Presentation (10 Points)** – The team conveys a passion for their idea and is persuasive in convincing the judges that it will solve a real problem in the marketplace. Information presented both verbally and visually is organized, realistic, and is also congruent with what is stated in business plan and in other parts of the presentation.

Presentation Visuals:

Teams may incorporate PowerPoint slides or other audio/visual aids into their presentations.

As stated in the rules, ULM will not guarantee that videos, sound clips, fonts, and other electronic aids used by teams will work and/or display at full capacity.

Teams may also demonstrate product samples or prototypes for their presentations.

Judging:

As in Round 1, decisions on finalists/winners in Round 2 are not judged solely on which teams receive the highest scores. Judges will only have the rubric as their guide to assist them in preparation and during presentations.

Round 2 judges will decide the first, second, and third place winners, to be announced at the awards presentation March 26th.

Schedule and Links:

- The presentation schedule and a list of judges will be forwarded to team leaders and primary advisors in advance of finals.
- If requested, ULM and Pelican Cup staff will work with finalists to schedule testing from presentation locations for internet connectivity and audio/video quality.
- For security and privacy, teams that have not completed their oral presentation will be unable to attend other presentations.
- Oral presentations will be available to the public for viewing.
- All presentations are subject to being recorded for marketing purposes.
- Teams should not be distracted if ULM, Pelican Cup staff, or a judge stops his/her video or audio during any part of the presentation.

Presentation Rules and Conditions:

- All data and information discussed or divulged by competitors during virtual presentations should be considered information that will enter the public domain, particularly the internet.
- Teams are solely responsible for protection of intellectual property rights, such as patents, trademarks, and copyrights.
- Competitors should not assume any right of confidentiality in any data or information discussed, divulged, or presented.
- Neither ULM, nor its designated organizations, nor judges, nor sponsors, assume any duty to screen or otherwise control the identity of those attending, viewing, or hearing all or part of the presentations.
- By entering the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup, teams agree that ULM may broadcast, record, photograph, or otherwise duplicate the presentations made during any phase of the competition.
- By entering the Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup, teams understand their idea has been publicly disclosed. Pelican Cup staff will not ask judges, reviewers, sponsors, staff, audience members, or any other individuals involved with the competition to sign non-disclosure or confidentiality statements.
- Teams agree that neither ULM and its affiliates, nor members of the judging panels, nor sponsors and their designated organizations, assume any liability for any disclosures of any information related to their submissions, which may be made, whether inadvertently or otherwise, by any judge, reviewer, staff member, audience member, or other individual connected with, participating in, viewing, hearing, or receiving information at any time during the competition.
- Competitors also agree that ULM, its affiliates, and other designated organizations may use videos, photos, transcripts, and/or recording(s) (in whole or part) for publicity and marketing purposes as their organizations may see fit, including those which may result in remuneration.

Awards Presentation / Elevator Pitch Competition – Thursday, March 26 – 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

The :90 elevator pitches from the finalist teams are an annual highlight of the awards presentation. These will be live. Pelican Cup staff will work with the teams on more details following Round 2.

One member of each finalist team must be selected to compete in the Elevator Pitch Competition held Thursday, March 26th, 2026 at Bayou Pointe Event Center on the campus of ULM.

One winner will be selected by the audience and announced with the other division winners.

Awards luncheon attendance by a 66% majority of the team and a faculty advisor is required. If the faculty advisor is unable to attend, an official representative from the competing team's university or college must attend and act on the advisor's behalf. The Awards Luncheon will be held at Bayou Pointe Event Center on the campus of the University of Louisiana Monroe.

Failure to attend the awards luncheon by the designated team majority and faculty advisor (or official institutional representative) as stated above will result in forfeiture of winnings.

Cash Awards Distribution

Tax Forms:

The Entrepreneurship Pelican Cup cash awards are subject to taxation. All finalist team members and advisors are required to complete and submit an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification) or, where applicable, a [W-8BEN](#) (Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding and Reporting (Individuals)) form to Cathi Hemed or directly to the ULM Foundation by 11:59 p.m. March 9, 2026.

All W9 and/or W-8BEN forms will be securely stored by the ULM Foundation. Forms submitted by all students and advisors on teams that are not winners in the competition will be destroyed. Winning team students and advisor forms will be stored securely and kept on file according to IRS rules.

For all students who win \$500 or more, IRS 1099 forms will be mailed in January 2027. They will be addressed according to the information provided by team members on their tax forms.

If a 1099 form is returned by the post office as undeliverable, either due to a move or other circumstances, it is the responsibility of the team member or advisor to contact the ULM Foundation with a request to re-send their 1099s to an updated mailing address.

Neither Pelican Cup staff nor the ULM Foundation can provide guidance or recommendations regarding taxes.

Dividing Cash Awards:

Pelican Cup staff will contact team leaders and advisors for cash award distribution preferences.

For team members: Typically, the award is split evenly by the number of team members registered in the team's YouNoodle applications and by receipt of completed tax forms.

Teams may also request one of the following options, with conditions:

- Make the award payable to the team's company. An email must be sent by the team leader to all team members and to Pelican Cup staff on this decision. **Each team member must verify their agreement** of the distribution via an email reply to all. Once email agreements are received from all team members,

the team leader needs to email a completed company W-9 to ULM. Once received, the award payment will be processed.

- Process different distribution amounts to team members instead of an 'even split.' The team leader will email a spreadsheet with each team member's name and the amount of his/her proposed distribution to all other team members and to Pelican Cup staff. **Each team member must verify their agreement** of the distribution via an email reply to all. Once Pelican Cup staff receives email agreements from all team members, the awards payments will be processed accordingly.

For advisors: Each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place team advisor listed as "Primary Team Advisor" in the team's YouNoodle application will receive a check for \$3,000. Primary advisors may share their award with another advisor – if they choose to do so but that will **not** be processed by the ULM foundation.

Remittance:

For team members winning cash, awards will be made

- via ULM Foundation check requests.
 - Checks will be processed in the name of each respective team member and mailed to the address as indicated on their W9 or W8-BEN form
- For non-ULM faculty advisors via ULM Foundation check requests
 - Checks will be processed in the name of primary faculty advisor and mailed to the address as indicated on their W9 or W8-BEN form
- For ULM advisors (faculty or staff employees) winning cash, awards will be processed via a University Payroll Action Form and coded with the appropriate ULM Foundation Banner Index/Fund.
 - Payment will be made according to each respective advisor's criteria as is currently established with University payroll.
- ***Checks not cashed within 90 days of the date issued will be voided.***

Questions / Assistance

Contact: Cathi Hemed, Director of External Initiatives, ULM; hemed@ulm.edu – 318-342-1151.

Good luck!