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Two students chosen as recipients of women's innovation award

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ANGELIQUE BANH



MICHELE VALADEZ

 Courtesy

Angelique Banh (left) and Michele Valadez were recently awarded the Women for Women's Innovation Award from the Center for Entrepreneurship at Wichita State University.

Wichita State University's [Center for Entrepreneurship](#) (CEI) has granted two students the [Women for Women's Innovation Award](#) — one who wants to create an app to help drivers in the event of a car crash, the other who wants to open a boutique for sustainable clothing.

The Women for Women's Innovation Award was created in 2020 to support women leaders and entrepreneurs in moving their ideas, said Nancy Kersenbrock, assistant director at Wichita State's CEI.

"This award identifies women entrepreneurs and provides that illusive early support to move their idea forward," Kersenbrock said. "The fact that this is being funded by Wichita State alumni illustrates the belief that our extended Wichita State family has in our future entrepreneurs."

Michele Valadez, a senior entrepreneurship major, and her company Anonymous Tech LLC, conceived of the 360 Car Cam, an app that offers a 360-degree view of a car's environment.

"In my first year of college I got into three different collisions on or around campus — none of which were my fault," Valadez said. "It was super frustrating that after I would get my car repaired, I would have a new door ding or scratch on my car. That's when my idea was born and the conversation began."

In her application for the award, Valadez wrote, "Picture this: You bought a brand-new car, and you decide to take it for a spin. You decide to stop at a store. You come out to your car completely wrecked. It appears a hit and run just occurred. The store had no cameras in the parking lot, and you are completely out of luck. Now let's rewind this situation. Let's imagine you had the 360 Car Cam installed on your car prior to taking it for a spin. The moment the other driver got close to your car, an alert would have been sent to your phone and the camera and begun recording. The footage would have captured a license plate and a driver. The average dash camera captures a 155-degree view in the front and 126-degree view from the rear, but not the full 360-degree view. In order to tell the full story, you need to see the full view."

Valadez was awarded \$2,500, which she plans to use to contract a developer to supplement her engineering team with the app side of the business.

"I am extremely grateful to be granted capital," she said. "When you are in the idea and prototype phases of a business, it's difficult to get capital because you aren't generating revenue yet. It's a wonderful feeling to know someone believes in your idea and your abilities to your business."

Angelique Banh, a graduate student in business administration, has a vision of a retail fashion boutique that sells products from vendors who uphold sustainable and ethical practices.

"My vision is for the shop to be more than just a shop," she said. "Hopefully, it would be viewed as a trailblazer for positively impacting the community, including donating time and resources to Wichita-based nonprofits such as HumanKind Ministries and ICT SOS."

On her application, Banh wrote: "I have been fascinated by the fashion industry for years. Arguably, Wichita is an unsaturated and untapped market in terms of conscious apparel, so introducing an unprecedented shop would be worthwhile. I propose an apparel and accessories shop that upholds

sustainable and ethical practices. This would include, but not be limited to, working with vendors that are committed to reducing their environmental footprint and treating employees fairly.”

Banh has spent considerable time researching and learning about the fashion industry, “including working at various retail stores, being an ambassador for five different brands, and traveling to Dallas Market Center. All of these experiences fueled my desire to establish my own unique brand,” she said.

While she hasn’t settled on a name for her boutique, Banh plans to use the \$1,500 she was awarded to build a website, purchase products and equipment, create digital and print advertisements, and pay legal fees.

By fall 2021, Banh says, she plans to launch her shop, starting small and then building on her success.

“At first, the shop would be online and featured at in-person pop-up markets like the Women’s Fair,” she said. “Once the shop expanded in the future, a brick-and-mortar location would open in Wichita.

Banh has met with the experts at the [Center for Entrepreneurship](#) to discuss her idea, and she plans on talking to business owners, instructors, and peers for guidance.

“Being selected for this award means so much to me. Having others believe my idea has potential gives me a huge boost of confidence,” she said. “Wichita State University keeps providing me with incredible opportunities I never imagined.”