

MEDIA INFORMATION
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'DRAGONS' GET A TASTE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY



Students proved that the entrepreneurial spirit is thriving at Royal Holloway, University of London with a tension packed evening of innovative business proposals, presented to the Dragons in Arora's Den – the College's own version of the famous television show.

The competition was organised by the student-led society, Royal Holloway Entrepreneurs. It was funded by Honorary Fellow, Surinder Arora, who has generously pledged to support both Arora's Den and the Arora Awards for Enterprise for the next 10 years. The Students' Union was transformed into an atmospheric den for the evening and 10 students were each given two minutes to make their pitch, which included a Boris Johnson-style cycle hire scheme for Egham; a student comedy club in London; a new fashion collection to sell on campus and a hands-free make-up application device, particularly aimed at the less able.

The team of four Dragons, led by Mr Arora, had three minutes in which to grill the competitors. The other three were Ry Morgan, founder of PleaseCycle, John Donaldson, Executive Director of Arora Hotels and Jonathan Pfahl, the co-founder of the Rock Star Youth group, who also launched a competition during the evening, which will award two members of Royal Holloway Entrepreneurs to go on an intensive course designed to help students to raise finance for their ideas.

First prize was awarded to Rashique Siddique, a Management student who had invented a new flavour of ice cream, Avoretto. The avocado and amaretto ice cream is already selling in his father's Indian restaurant.

Rashique said: "It was a great honour to pitch my business idea to the dragons. The last two days have been hectic, from trying to get the pitch right to making sure the product was immaculate. It was also great to see other amazing 'out of the box' ideas, and it just shows that people do have business acumen."

Mr Arora presented the winner with a cheque for £1,000 to develop his business but also offered him something money can't buy. He explained: "I was so impressed with the winning Ice Cream concept that I have offered Rashique the opportunity to feature his products on the menu at our flagship hotel - Sofitel London Heathrow at Terminal 5.

"I am delighted to strengthen my relationship with Royal Holloway, a university for which I have had great respect during my 20 year association through the launch of Arora's Den and the Arora Awards for Enterprise", Mr Arora, Founder & CEO of Arora Hotels added.

The second prize of £150 was presented to a Music student, Joanna Hardy, whose innovative project was intended to appeal to everyone with a love of old-fashioned vinyl records. Her proposal was to bulk-buy records from charity shops, then up-cycle them by backing them with cork and market the products to shops and restaurants as table placemats.

At the end of the evening no one left empty handed. Each contestant was delighted to receive a cheque for £50 to encourage them in their future business ventures.

Vice Principal, Professor Philip Beesley said: "This was a wonderful evening and really demonstrated what inspirational and innovative students we have at Royal Holloway. I am sure all the students would like to join me in thanking Surinder Arora for his magnificent support, without which this would not have been possible."

Luka Blackman Gibbs, president of Royal Holloway Entrepreneurs was absolutely delighted with the success of the evening. She said: "This event epitomises what we see as the mission of Royal Holloway Entrepreneurs - to deliver, in a professional and entertaining format, events that inspire, motivate and support students in pursuing and developing their enterprising ideas. What we witnessed here this evening was a life changing event for not only the winner, but for everybody present who felt the thrill and energy of innovative pursuit present in the hall this evening, and from now on will have the courage to believe in their own ideas

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Note to editors

About Arora Hotels – www.arorahotels.com

Arora Hotels is an independent hotel company owned and founded by Surinder Arora in 1999. It is the UK's leading specialist hotelier to the airline industry and one of the fastest growing private hotel companies in the UK.

The company has made a name for itself through the design, construction and operation of luxury hotels, with exceptional levels of hospitality.

The portfolio currently comprises 6 hotels with over 2,200 bedrooms. Prime locations include the Arora Hotel Heathrow, Arora Park Heathrow, Arora Hotel Gatwick/Crawley, Arora Hotel Manchester, the flagship 605-bedroom Sofitel London Heathrow, directly connected to Terminal 5 and Sofitel London Gatwick at the North Terminal. Both Sofitel hotels are operated under a franchise agreement with Accor Hospitality.

At The Kia Oval, Arora is currently working in partnership with Surrey County Cricket Club on the development of a four-star, 168-bedroom hotel and is also preferred partner for the new 212-bedroom Royal Ascot Hotel opposite the world famous racecourse.

Each of its hotels is Investors in People accredited.

The property arm of the Arora Group – Arora Management Services – is involved in property asset management of a portfolio of landmark office buildings at key UK airports.

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Image: The Dragons try out the winning Avoretto ice cream.