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Project Innovation: Start Here, Go Places. Competition of Creative Excellence, winning \$4,000 in scholarships and \$3,000 in grant money for their school.

Taija Sparkman • Apr. 01, 2013

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[The American Institute of CPAs](#) recently announced a team from Batavia High School in Batavia, Illinois was selected as the winner of its Project Innovation: Start Here, Go Places. Competition of Creative Excellence. The team was awarded \$4,000 in scholarships and \$3,000 in grant money for their school.

Participants in the competition had to develop a hit TV show based on the accounting profession. Teams were to include two to four high school students and a

faculty advisor. The students had to create a concept for a new show, develop a

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of the competition, students learned to communicate effectively, think creatively and work within a team – all of which are keys to getting ahead in the profession.”

The winning team, named Accounting Pros, consists of David Madrigal, Stanley Walden and Zach Thilges, with Jeffrey Miller serving as faculty advisor. In their proposed show, Dominic Clark, a young SEC agent with his CPA license, is hired by a toy company and discovers fraudulent activity. He is then hired by the FBI when he exposes the toy company's fraud. In his role as forensic accountant with the FBI, Dominic works undercover to expose white collar crimes. Meanwhile he is also secretly investigating the agency's financial history.

“I was really impressed with their idea. I could genuinely see how it puts accountants in a heroic light and generates interest in the profession with the broadest audience possible. Their pilot did a great job setting up the central plot points of the show, and their budget was well considered. The team did an excellent job explaining their idea in their final presentation and really selling their show,” said John Digrado, CPA, Executive Director of Finance, Sony Pictures Television Networks International. Digrado was the final round judge, responsible for evaluating the finalists' videos and budgets, as well as their presentation skills.

The second place team was from Pine Ridge High School in Deltona, Florida, and they won \$3,000 in scholarships and \$2,000 for their school. Foxborough High School in Foxborough, Massachusetts, won third place and \$2,000 in scholarships and \$1,000 for their school.

High school students from around the country entered submissions for the competition. The top entries were selected by a panel of judges and their teams' videos were posted to the Start Here, Go Places. website. The public then voted for their favorite videos and the finalists presented their ideas via Google+ Hangout to Digrado.

“The competition was a great way to get students thinking about accounting in a

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