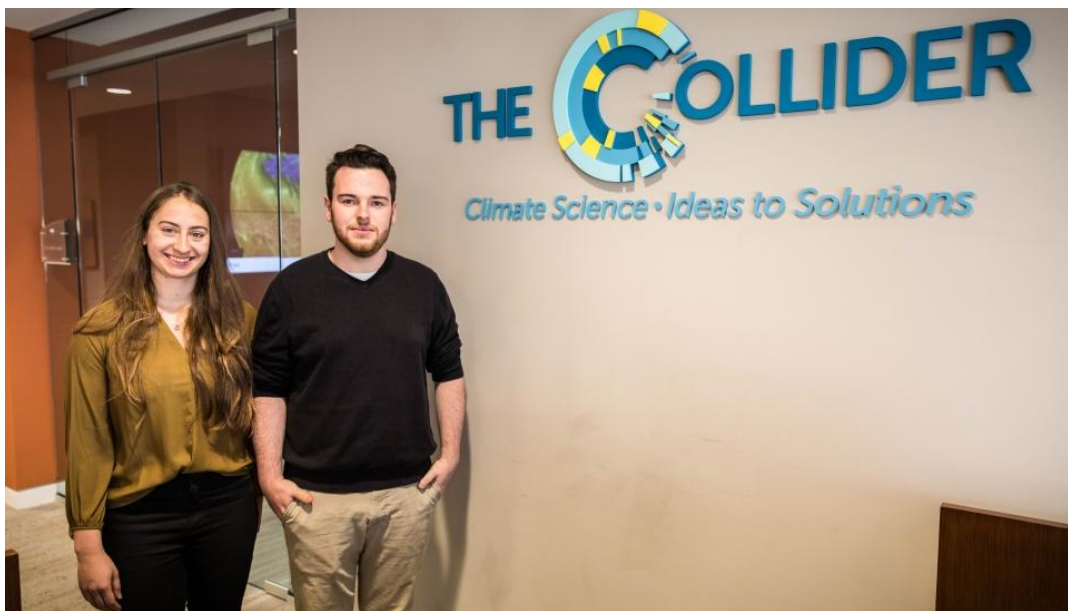


Climate Leaders



UNC Asheville swept the competition at the Summit for Emerging Climate Leaders at the 2018 ClimateCon, held in March at The Collider in Asheville, a nonprofit innovation center focused on the environmental and climate sciences industry. From among numerous undergraduate students and young professionals pitching their best climate business and research ideas, math major Anna Dasilva took home the prize for the best business pitch, and atmospheric sciences major Conor Mulderrig won best research and policy pitch. They've both earned the opportunity to take part in a paid internship at The Collider.

Mulderrig is no stranger to The Collider; he's already interning there with the Destination SPACE program, a STEM education outreach group that is currently running a high school after-school program in multiple schools across several states.

"As an atmospheric sciences major concentrating in climatology, climate change is something that I am very passionate about, especially climate policy, and the largest reservation about pursuing a more aggressive climate policy agenda is the economic feasibility of the rate at which we need to shift to cleaner and more sustainable energy," Mulderrig said. "The main mission of The Collider, and more specifically ClimateCon, is to foster collaboration between climate researchers and the business sector in order to create a market for climate solutions."

Mulderrig knew he wanted to be a part of that mission. He pitched his research idea of investigating the effect of climate change on annual rainfall and changes in

its inter-annual variability in India as a way to combat increases in farmer suicide.

“The importance of suicide prevention speaks for itself, but there are numerous economic and political implications of lower crops yields and decreased Indian foodsecurity, both in India and on a global scale,” Mulderrig said.

By winning the pitch competition Mulderrig has earned a 10-week paid internship at The Collider, allowing him to extend his current internship with Destination SPACE, which had been scheduled to end in March. He’s excited to have the opportunity to continue his work, and to stay connected with The Collider.



Conor Mulderrig

“If anyone has a passion about finding climate solutions, The Collider is a great place to develop connections with local businesses and researchers that are passionate about environmental sustainability,” Mulderrig said.

For Dasilva, ClimateCon was a chance to explore careers and make connections in climate business and sustainability. Participating in the competition was an added bonus.

“Honestly, I signed up to pitch about 30 minutes before the competition started because I was inspired by the spirit of the conference,” Dasilva said. She pitched the business idea that she and a classmate had developed in UNC Asheville’s [Ideas to Action course \(https://ideastoaction.unca.edu/\)](https://ideastoaction.unca.edu/), taught by Professor of Management Mary Lynn Manns.

“During the course my partner, Kelli Early, and I created a business plan for TerraFemme, a service that collects and composts menstrual waste. At the end of the semester, Kelli and I won UNCA’s Social Entrepreneurship Competition,” Dasilva said. Since then she’s been conducting undergraduate research on regulative issues concerning composting menstrual material, and has presented her findings at the State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium.

Still, Dasilva found pitching the idea to a large crowd could be unnerving.

“Public speaking is a skill that is still really scary for me, especially on a topic that is often a hit or miss among crowds. Men and women alike are still disgusted by menstruation and are uncomfortable discussing it,” Dasilva said. “Deciding to overcome my hesitance to pitch my idea that I have been working for over a year on was really scary, especially not knowing how the crowd is going to react.”

While she was proud of herself for just working up the courage to make the pitch, winning the competition, Dasilva said, was a huge bonus. She’ll present her idea



Anna Dasilva

again at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in April, and graduate from UNC Asheville in May.

"I believe that we need to think about all of the trash that we accumulate on a daily basis. Menstrual products quickly add up in a single person's life without much thought to their environmental impact," Dasilva said. "If TerraFemme never becomes a real business, I would like the concept to inspire others to rethink waste disposal and create creative and innovative solutions to our societies excessive single-use trash problem."

For more information about The Collider, [visit their website \(https://thecollider.org/\)](https://thecollider.org/).

For more information about the Ideas to Action course, [visit the Ideas to Action webpage \(https://ideastoaction.unca.edu/\)](https://ideastoaction.unca.edu/).

HELPFUL LINKS

Embark Orientation
 Class Schedules
 Financial Aid
 On Campus Housing
 Campus Police
 Campus Recreation
 Career Center
 Information Technology Services

CAMPUS UPDATE

This Girl Laughs. This Girl Cries. This Girl Does Nothing.

TheatreUNCA presents this young audiences play by Finegan Kruckemeyer, featuring the work of puppeteer Hobey Ford, with shows April 19-22 in Belk Theatre.

[INFO & TICKETS>](#)

CONNECT



UNC Asheville
 One University Heights
 Asheville, NC 28804
webmaster@unca.edu
 828.251.6600