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Austin, Texas

SXSWedu® Launch Competition Announces ELSA as Winner

2016 Winner announced at sixth annual SXSWedu Conference & Festival

March 10, 2016, AUSTIN, Texas – The SXSWedu Conference & Festival named ELSA as the winner of the SXSWedu Launch startup competition. Following two days of pitches from this year’s ten finalists, the announcement closed out the competition at the Launch party, hosted by the Walton Family Foundation, in Austin, Texas.

ELSA is a mobile app for language learners to improve pronunciation and reduce accent, utilizing in-house speech recognition, automated feedback and deep learning technology. ELSA works to enable 1.5 billion learners to increase language fluency at the lowest cost and unlock new opportunities.

The SXSWedu Launch startup competition, powered by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, serves as an unparalleled opportunity for early stage startups in the education space to highlight their products and services in front of a panel of judges and a live audience. The program works to bring the SXSWedu community together to move the needle forward in education.

“The diversity and innovation seen in the work of this year’s finalists epitomize the creative and forward-thinking nature of the SXSWedu community,” said Ron Reed, SXSWedu Executive Producer. “We’re proud to host such a showcase of groundbreaking products and services and celebrate invention at SXSWedu.”

The fifth annual startup competition featured ten finalists working across early, K12 and higher education on initiatives including foreign language learning, international student success, substitute teaching and more. The finalists were selected by the Launch Advisory Board from more than 100 applications to compete onsite at SXSWedu 2016. The competition lightning round saw Admit.me, ELSA and Words Liive advance to the showdown stage. For a full list of 2016 Launch finalists, please visit: <http://sxswedu.com/startups>.

“The Launch Competition is truly one of the highlights at SXSWedu,” said Stephen Laster, Chief Digital Officer at McGraw Hill Education and Launch judge. “I was deeply impressed by the innovation and commitment to teaching and learning that was demonstrated by all of the finalists.”

The competition drew upon the insight and expertise of this year’s judges, all of who serve as leaders in investment, entrepreneurialism, schools and classrooms. The 2016 Launch judges were Joan E. Hughes (The University of Texas at Austin), Juan Cabrera (El Paso ISD), Sam Chaudhary (ClassDojo), Brian Dixon (Kapor Capital), José Luis Vilson (New York Public Schools), Sehreen NoorAli (Noodle Education), Stephen Laster (McGraw Hill Education) and Felice Nudelman (Antioch University). The 2016 SXSWedu Launch competition was emceed by Guy Kawasaki (Canva).

About SXSWedu

The SXSWedu Conference & Festival fosters innovation in learning by hosting a diverse and energetic community of stakeholders across a variety of backgrounds in education. The four-day event affords registrants open access to engaging sessions, interactive workshops, hands-on learning experiences, film screenings, early-stage startups and a host of networking

opportunities. By providing a platform for collaboration, SXSWedu works to promote creativity and social change.

SXSWedu is a component of the South by Southwest® family of conferences and festivals that includes SXSW® Music, Film and Interactive; SXSW Eco® and SXSW V2V®. Internationally recognized as the convergence gathering for the creative arts, SXSWedu extends SXSW's support for the art of engagement beyond musicians, filmmakers and new media innovators to include society's true rock stars: educators.

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