A team made up of 3 NTU BioEngineering students Jeanny Putri Haliman, Mao Ning and Koh Guo Wei, Alvin won 3rd prize (USD$5000) in the Abbott Innovation University Challenge 2012. The team presented their ideas and solutions for their Challenge Project: Novel Devices for Endpoint Collection in Clinical Trials.

Abbott is a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals and medical products, including nutritionals, devices, and diagnostics. The Innovation Challenge is an opportunity to learn about the pharmaceutical industry and its current challenges with the possibility of having the winning solution become part of an industry leading company’s business model. Participants will be able to apply the theory they have learned during their studies to a practical business case.

The team members recount their individual experience:

Alvin said, “It has been an exciting and meaningful learning journey during the Abbott Innovation University Challenge. With the wide array of challenges it offers, I am able to best crystallize my knowledge learnt from lectures and propose an idea which would be useful to Abbott and its customers. During the semi-finals, I received valuable insights in molding a promising proposal through the presentation to the jury board and coaching by Abbott leaders. I am very grateful that Abbott is willing to invest in young minds and, by spurring the innovative spirit in us, has enriched the undergraduate life of many students.”
Mao Ning said, “It was the best learning experience that I've ever had! The challenges were raised up by experienced industry professionals, thus it is good to know that our effort is well aligned with the industry's need. In addition, the challenge questions are nicely defined: not too general and not too specific, giving us the right freedom to explore and develop an idea.

The first phase of working involved a lot of research, from the industry landscape of the challenge we chose how to develop the idea we came up with. It was very fulfilling to realize that we were applying the knowledge learnt in school, which rarely happened besides exams. And of course we also have learnt much more beyond school.

The coaching session was a great idea. It is the first time that I have a chance to talk to a business leader in the biomedical industry. Our coach taught us how different a business/industry person's thinking is from students'. Besides the technology and application aspects, it is also important to consider the products' market, cost and return.

The experience has also made us learn how to work closely and efficiently within a small group of people in a rather stringent time period. Even though we had been doing an industrial attachment during the competition, we still tried to make time for frequent meeting and discussion, as well as working individually. When having questions of an alien field to us, it was helpful to ask other friends for help. Thus it was also an experience of working interdisciplinary.”

Jeanny said, “Abbott Innovation University Challenge has been enriching for me. I am grateful that I am given the opportunity to learn from the expert, Mr Neeraj Garg, the Global Strategy Director of Abbott on the semi-final coaching session. Through him, our team learnt valuable lessons on different aspects of product designs. Abbott Innovation University Challenge has definitely broadened my horizon and stretched me out of my comfort zone. Though throughout the competition, me and my team members have to struggle in squeezing our time in the middle of our internships, I would say I feel lucky to participate in this challenge. I would like to encourage undergraduates to step out of comfort zone to take this challenge.”