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FPA Announces 2024 Student Flexible Packaging Design Challenge Winners

The entries show a high level of creativity, a strong understanding of the mechanical properties of flexible packaging materials, and the manufacturing processes involved

Annapolis, MD, July 9, 2024 – The Flexible Packaging Association (FPA), the leading advocate and voice for the growing U.S. flexible packaging industry, is pleased to announce the FPA 2024 Student Flexible Packaging Design Challenge winners. This year's first winner was a team of students from the University of Wisconsin–Stout, and the second-place winner was a team of students from the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly).

FPA's annual Achievement Awards competition recognizes innovative flexible packaging from across its membership. The industry also believes it is important to encourage and recognize students who are working to become the next generation of packaging engineers and designers.

The first-place winner was a team of students from the University of Wisconsin–Stout, Starr Gong and Logan Searles, for their Pringles® Side Opening Pouch concept. The students were under the direction of Assistant Professor, Xiaojing "Kate" Liu. The concept called for a total redesign of the traditional Pringles package for a stand-up pouch with a flip stand feature. The re-sealable pouch and nitrogen-filled cushioning help to protect the chips from being crushed and retain product freshness. A wide-open side design provides consumer convenience for accessing the chips. This concept also won an award for "Best Video" which will be promoted through FPA's social media channels.

Liu states, "What made this design successful was persistence, attention to detail, and teamwork. Within the limited time, Logan experimented with many structures, overcoming trial and error to find the best solution for opening the pouch at the last minute. Starr took charge of graphic design and video production. After communicating with the structure design team, she quickly grasped the concept and created a clear visual representation. By cleverly flipping the side-gusset stand-up pouch, the new design perfectly achieved its intended goals and resolved the current packaging issues."

"Winning this competition is a powerful acknowledgment of students' creativity and dedication. It demonstrates that the industry values fresh perspectives and innovative ideas from the next generation of packaging professionals," notes Gong. "It is a reminder that hard work and persistence truly pay off and encourage us to continue thinking outside the box. This success is a testament to our ability to address real-world packaging issues, improve upon existing solutions, and push the boundaries of what's possible in packaging design."



According to Searles, “The FPA design challenge has been one of, if not, the most engaging challenges in which I have ever taken part. The unique nature of flexible materials offered a growing opportunity for me and gave me a hands-on experience to understand different plastics and their properties. I have always had an interest in design, and this competition allowed me to exercise that interest. From this, I see the endless applications for flexible packaging and my potential in the industry.”

Sizzle Sleeves, a packaging concept for pre-cooked single-serve bacon slices, was the second-place winner. Garrett Foster, Haaken Pedersen, and Clorinda Webb from the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) developed the concept under the direction of Joongmin Shin, Ph.D., Professor. Sizzle Sleeves revolutionizes how consumers enjoy bacon by offering a unique packaging solution that addresses convenience and suitability.

“We tried to envision the most convenient, least messy way to package bacon. We drew some inspiration from products such as Otter Pops® or Hot Pockets®, as both products clearly communicate the product use instructions and allow for a convenient user experience in opening and disposing of the packaging,” states Pedersen. “This packaging alternative allows for a more convenient and less messy—no pan needed or plate—way of cooking and eating bacon.”

Shin notes, “I am proud of our students for securing second place in the FPA Student Design Competition with their innovative portion-controlled bacon packaging concept. This design enhances the convenience of pre-cooked bacon and extends its shelf life. We are deeply grateful to the Flexible Packaging Association for offering our students a valuable platform to demonstrate their creativity and innovation. Opportunities like this are essential in nurturing the next generation of packaging professionals.”


FPA’s Emerging Leadership Council (ELC) oversees the Student Flexible Packaging Design Challenge and judged this year’s competition. The ELC judges for the competition included:

- Kasie Fairbarn, Vice President of Sales, Windmoeller & Hoelscher Corporation, ELC Co-Chair
- Weston Harcourt, Strategic Account Manager, Sonoco Flexible Packaging, ELC Co-Chair
- Jonathan Quinn, Industry Advisor


For the 2024 competition, FPA received 49 concept outlines from some of the top packaging design programs across the United States. From the concept outlines submitted, 11 were selected to continue to the development phase.

For high-resolution photos of the winners, [please click here](#).

FIRST PLACE HONORS

	<p>Pringles® Side Opening Pouch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Team: Starr Gong and Logan Searles • School: University of Wisconsin – Stout • Professor: Xiaojing "Kate" Liu, Assistant Professor <p>Get ready to flip your snacking experience upside down with the all-new Pringles® packaging makeover! We've ditched the old-school cans for a hip, stand-up pouch with a flip stand feature that's as funky as it is functional. Say goodbye to squished chips and hello to freshness with our re-sealable pouch and nitrogen-filled cushioning. Plus, accessing your favorite stack has never been easier with our wide-open side design. It's like a party in a pouch! And guess what? It's all made possible without breaking a sweat on the production line. So, get your hands on the future of snacking and let the good times roll with Pringles®!</p>
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SECOND PLACE HONORS

	<p>Sizzle Sleeves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Team: Garrett Foster, Haaken Pedersen, and Clorinda Webb • School: California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) • Professor: Joongmin Shin, Ph.D., Associate Professor <p>Sizzle Sleeves revolutionize how we enjoy bacon by offering a unique packaging solution that addresses convenience and suitability. Each package contains five separate sleeves with three slices of pre-cooked bacon per sleeve. The innovative packaging design lets consumers easily microwave their bacon directly in the tray provided without mess, enhancing the user experience. Sizzle Sleeves stands out by reducing food and packaging waste, promoting portion management, and offering a more organized and uniform distribution method. Without requiring new printing technologies, the plastic used to create Sizzle Sleeves' packaging utilizes microwaveable, transparent, and vacuum-sealable polymers that keep the product fresh for longer. Designed to be mass-produced using existing flexible packaging technologies, Sizzle Sleeves introduce an efficient, user-friendly, and environmentally conscious option for bacon lovers, setting a new standard in the packaging industry.</p>
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For more information on the Student Flexible Packaging Design Challenge or the Flexible Packaging Achievement Awards Competition, please visit www.flexpack.org, or contact FPA at 410-694-0800.

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About the Flexible Packaging Association (FPA)

The Flexible Packaging Association is the voice of the U.S. manufacturers of flexible packaging and their suppliers. The association's mission is connecting, advancing, and leading the flexible packaging industry. Flexible packaging represents over \$45 billion in annual sales in the U.S. and is the second largest and one of the fastest growing segments of the packaging industry. Flexible packaging is produced from paper, plastic, film, aluminum foil, or any combination of those materials, and includes bags, pouches, labels, liners, wraps, rollstock, and other flexible products. Learn more at flexpack.org.