TBMC Past Winners: Taking the friction out of rental inspections

March 24, 2025

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Tulane Business Model Competition. As we count down to the start of the 2025 competition, Freeman checks in with some of our past winners to find out where they are now.



Marco Nelson (MBA ’19) listens while teammate Lydia Winkler (MBA/JD ’19) speaks during the 2019 Tulane Business Model Competition. Nelson and Winkler won first place for their startup, RentCheck, an app that streamlines the security deposit process.

2019
1st Place
RentCheck (Tulane University)

Marco Nelson (MBA ’19) knows firsthand what the Tulane Business Model Competition (TBMC) can do for a company.

“Winning the competition was so important,” says Nelson, who, together with co-founder Lydia Winkler (MBA/JD ’19), took home the top prize in 2019 for their startup RentCheck. “It helped us gain momentum and connect with mentors and advisors who could help us move the business forward.”



Marco Nelson (MBA ’19) is CEO of RentCheck, an app that helps property managers streamline rental inspections with their residents.

RentCheck is an app that enables renters to perform guided rental property inspections, streamlining the security deposit process and making it easier for residents and property managers to ensure fair outcomes. In the years since the competition, the company has continued to add new customers and expand its operations.

“RentCheck now serves property managers and residents in all 50 states and services over 350,000 rental properties,” Nelson says. “To meet this demand, we are currently a team of 24 full-time employees.”

Nelson says the company combined its $35,000 prize with funds received from investors to enable it to hire the initial team members after graduating from Tulane.

In addition to the financial boost, the TBMC also provided the RentCheck team with a venue for refining their business pitch, making the company more compelling to potential backers.

“The competition helped us develop a tighter pitch, which in turn helped get investors excited about what we were looking to build,” Nelson says. “Homing in on the pitch was the most important piece because clearly articulating the problem and solution are so important to get early investment.”

Nelson says the competition also connected the company with mentors who provided critical advice on getting the company off the ground.

“We met advisors who are still involved with RentCheck to this day,” Nelson says.

Six years after winning the competition, RentCheck continues its mission to simplify the renter/property manager relationship. Nelson says the company hopes to scale its core product to reach even more customers as well as bring new products to market in the near future.

Looking ahead to this year’s competition, Nelson has two pieces of advice for participants. “Really focus on which parts of your pitch are easily understood and which parts might confuse investors,” he says. “To succeed in the competition, you’ll have to clarify these parts of your pitch. Also, think about the riskiest part of your business so that you can be prepared to respond to questions about that.”

The semifinal round of the 2025 Tulane Business Model Competition will take place on Monday, March 24, in Room 170 of the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex. The final round will take place on Tuesday, March 25, in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex’s Marshall Family Commons.