**STEEPED IN INNOVATION**

Fulbright scholars pitch tea app to Bigelow CEO

BY BRIAN KOONZ
PHOTO AUTUMN DRISCOLL

The whistle of the kettle was unmistakable, an invitation to sip some tea and spend some time with your thoughts. Only this siren wasn’t shouting from a stovetop—it was coming from a new mobile app created by Fulbright Scholars at the School of Business.

The app, Time 4 Tea, was demonstrated recently for Bigelow Tea, the Connecticut-based specialty tea company. The timer helps consumers brew a perfect cup of tea by matching the ideal steeping time for each blend.

As part of the app’s beta testing, Cindi Bigelow, the company’s president and chief executive officer, visited the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship for the first time to share her company’s story and to steep a cup of Lemon Ginger tea. She cautioned her audience to never, ever squeeze a tea bag when removing it from a cup, as the bitter tannins will ruin the taste.

It’s precisely this spirit of relentless curiosity that Professor Norman Gray nurtures. “We take the idea and we commercialize it,” said Gray, the Carlton Highsmith Chair of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. “We do that by taking the idea, and with the student, putting a team around it that includes all the elements necessary to make it successful. Then we can go to funding and raise money.”

Gray said the other option is to find a strategic partner.

“This is a project that really can’t go to funding, but if we find a partner like Bigelow ... we can make it real. That’s the fun part of it.”

The hard part of it, as Bigelow knows, is building a company that can feed a dream and grow it. “I’m an irritant,” Bigelow said. “I drive, I drive, I push. I never compromise, and I challenge you. But I also want to motivate you, and I want to inspire you.”