

## Students take on Silicon Valley

### **The Innovation course gives SSE MBA students the framework and tools to discover business opportunities.**

Traditional learning methods are being put to the test in the SSE MBA program's Innovation course, where students go beyond the classroom for inspiration.

This year's students were encouraged to find their passion, competencies and business ideas, form teams, and pitch their ideas during an intensive week in the Silicon Valley in October. After months of preparation, ten teams presented and discussed their ideas with companies as diverse as Apple, LinkedIn, Redbubble and the Nike Women's Marathon, among others.

"We wanted the students to meet people who could help them take their business ideas further," says course director Anders Richtnér, from SSE's Department of Management, who taught the course together with Lena Ramfelt from Stanford Technology Venture Program. "Pitching to a group in the Silicon Valley is completely different from pitching in a classroom and we wanted the students to go out and see what it's like to do business in this region which has been extremely successful in re-inventing itself. It was very inspiring for the students to be where innovation is really taking place."

The forty MBA students also attended lectures at Stanford University and all teams presented their business plans to an external jury that selected two winners. These two groups went on to present to a second jury consisting of six people from Cisco, Amazon, BASES (Business Association of Stanford Entrepreneurial Students), Nuance, Cypress Security, and EchoVC Partners, all with long experience of funding entrepreneurs and building businesses.

"We want students to learn as much as possible and the learning becomes much greater when they are exposed to things outside the classroom too," says Richtnér. "We don't know which diamonds they will pick up along the way, but they pick what is relevant for them."