

**Creating the Perfect New Hire**  
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**by Jamie Huish Stum**

Graduating students can get a big resume booster before entering the job market through University of Utah's Lassonde New Venture Development Center.

The NVDC gives a diverse mix of students an opportunity to get out of the classroom and hone their skills in real world ventures. Students take a university-developed technology product and perform market research and write a business plan to prepare a product for commercialization. They also make pitches to investors and the university. This provides the experience that goes beyond lectures and textbooks. It's the ultimate test of applying skills and utilizing concepts for real world scenarios.

Each summer, officials from the center pour over more than 50 potential technologies developed at the University of Utah that look promising for commercialization. The team whittles it down to about eight products, then assigns three students to each project. Students receive class credit to spend the year putting together a start-up business around the technology. The goal is to have a complete business plan by the end of the year that is ready to be entered into a number of business competitions around the state and the nation.

If they place in a competition, students receive funds to get their business' feet on the ground. Even if they don't win, they gain the type of experience employers want. "I have employers come to me and actively recruiting students who have had this experience," says Troy D'Ambrosio, director of NVDC. "It's something different that's not a traditional university experience."

According to the center's Web site, its goal is "to assist researchers with breakthrough technologies and determine the commercialization potential of those ideas while providing students a unique educational experience in new business development." Sounds complicated, but it makes a lot of sense for a student looking for an edge before entering the work force.

Majors from many disciplines are able to cross collaborate and teach each other, just like an actual company. It's not often that a business student and a science student get to work together while each capitalizes on his area of study. Though the center is located in the David Eccles School of Business, students work on the technology side and the business model.

NVDC officials say this experience makes their students more marketable. Instead of joining the rat race at entry level positions, NVDC students receive offers at the executive and managerial level.

"When students are interviewing for a job, everybody has the grades and the classes, but when an employer sees this and students are able to say they've had some business experience, they're able to really differentiate themselves," says D'Ambrosio. "Employers are looking for some entrepreneurship and research experience these days."

The center began in 2001 and has experienced remarkable success. Students have assisted in 15 start-up businesses including Wasatch MicroFluidics, Carbolyon Biosciences and ResCue Medical Systems, Inc.