

Innovations

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COMPETITIONS REWARD INNOVATION

Students from across the state participated in two competitions designed to foster innovation and encourage entrepreneurship. Both the Tech Titans and Utah Entrepreneur Challenge competitions are open to all college and university students in Utah.

Tech Titans, a statewide idea competition in its second year, awarded prizes to students in the areas of Computer Science, Biotechnology, Engineering, and Consumer Products. Along with cash prizes, the winners received hours of free legal consulting from Thorpe North and Western, and other professional mentors.

Over 160 undergraduate and graduate students from in disciplines ranging from computer software to consumer products participated. They represented the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, Utah State University, Weber State University, Southern Utah University, Utah Valley University, and Bridgerland Applied Technology College.

This year's best include Grand Prize winner Scott Sundberg, DaBerg Diagnostics from the University of Utah; Biotechnology winners Peter A. Read, Creighton Petty and Sahil Mehta, SOLVOGEL from the University of Utah; Consumer Products idea winner Dorthyann Isackson, Team DI from the University of Utah; Computer Science winner Jacob Budd, The Informatic Specialists from the University of Utah; and Engineering idea winner Aaron Willis, H2 Transport from Utah Valley University.

"Tech Titans forced me to look at the complete

picture to understand all of the potential markets for my idea," said Scott Sundberg, Tech Titans grand prize winner, "It helped me define how my idea could greatly improve on cancer detection techniques." Over \$10,000 in cash and in-kind services were awarded.

The Utah Entrepreneur Challenge, a business plan competition for students in Utah's public and private colleges and universities had 184 teams comprised of 442 students from ten institutions participated this year. The teams vied for over \$100,000 in cash and in-kind contributions. The competition consists of three rounds culminating in a ten minute business plan presentations to a panel of judges.

Sponsored by Zions Bank, the \$50,000 first prize went to AmWell, a University of Utah team led by Julie Jay a third year bioengineering PhD student and honors undergraduate business student Sean Bunker. Runners up winning \$10,000 each were EnergyTap from the University of Utah (Chuck Roberts, MBA; Jeremy Goeckeritz PhD E.E.) and Klymite Technologies from BYU. Additional finalist teams receiving \$2,000 each included AKADI Technologies, Cerberus Carbon Solutions, Hyperblimp, nFocus Microsystems, Qgia Connect, Tactile Response, and Your Gene.*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF INNOVATIONS



Venture Bench program gets new companies moving.



Freshmen engineering students are inspired to start inventing.



University Start-up company feature: Akadi. Opening the door of opportunity.



Join the online research community that's the faculty research interest database.

The first ever event of its kind was used as a forum to recognize those companies that have forged ongoing research relationships with the University of Utah and that are seeking to expand their research and new technology development.

UBRIDGE CONFERENCE 2008

Over 30 life science companies from across the country were guests of the University's Technology Commercialization Office as part of its first UBridge event. Attendees were given a detailed update on novel translational research areas the University is focusing on and the U's current capabilities in diagnostic imaging, cancer research and personalized medicine. The general comment was one of, "I had no idea the University of Utah was doing so much in our particular industry." The event quickly showed a return with about 15% of the companies scheduling follow-up visits to further investigate research and licensing collaborations on campus. The one and one half day conference will become an annual event with UBridge 2009 bringing some of the national leaders in digital media and software development. *



VENTURE BENCH™ PROGRAM GETS NEW COMPANIES MOVING

Venture Bench™ is a new program designed to provide University affiliated companies and start-ups access to resources and research facilities critical to early stage companies. Technology Venutre Development has organized a suite of start-up services for this purpose.

Establishment of corporate structure

Logo/Brand creation

Web hosting and development

Grant funding

Market assessment

Business plan help

Access to research facilities and labs

Seed funding

Venture access

Entrepreneur in Residence

SBIR/STTR Development

Accounting Services

Jim Mercer and Michael Howelett came up with an innovative idea designed to significantly reduce healthcare acquired infections from catheters and related vascular access systems. As nurses at the University of Utah Hospital, they have a first-hand understanding of the risks of these infections and the need for a solution to this growing problem. In their spare time Mercer and Howelett developed the DualCap™ system and shopped it around, making little or no progress until they heard about the Technology Commercialization Office and the host of programs developed to assist in technology development. Excited to utilize these resources available to University inventors, Mercer and Howelett disclosed and assigned their Intellectual Property to the University. The TCO assisted in the formation of a new company called Catheter Connections.

Catheter Connections was then able to access and utilize the University's suite of small business start-up resources. These resources include, graphic design, web hosting, management development, access to University facilities and researchers, grant writing assistance, market assessment, business plan development, fund raising, and connections to key industry contacts. These services along with a host of others are collectively known as the "Venture Bench Program."

Vicki Farrar, President and CEO of Catheter Connections, is thrilled with the assistance from Venture Bench and the help from TCO team member Dr. Jayne Carney. "Dr. Carney's assistance in conjunction with Venture Bench has been priceless," says Farrar, "She has provided technical exper-

tise, introduced us to potential investors, helped develop our business plan, presentations, and made an introduction to a world renowned expert who has agreed to serve on our Scientific Advisory Board." According to Farrar, by the time the technology is commercialized, the company will be significantly more mature and advanced than it would have been without this assistance. "This support is unique -- we are fortunate," says Farrar. "The University has provided extraordinary assistance in helping the company get up and running," said Farrar.

Brian Cummings, Assistant Vice President for the TCO is a strong believer in this new program. "We anticipate helping many other new university start-up companies find the same success through our Venture Bench program," said Cummings. "By putting together many of the necessities that companies require but are often difficult and time-consuming to find, we hope to allow our companies to better focus on product and market development on an accelerated timeframe."*

For more information on Venture Bench, please call 801.581.7792



OPENING THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

Akadi is a University of Utah start-up company formed in 2007 out of the S.J. Quinney College of Law. The product, DAN, was named in tribute to Daniel Gorrell, the Director of Information Technology at the College of Law who suddenly passed away in July 2007.

Improve security communications and target your customers? That's what Akadi is trying to help you do. Akadi offers the latest in digital signage technology. Its core product, better known as DAN (Display and Alert Network), enables



Aaron Dewald and Wesley Christiansen developed the technology at the law school's IT retreat last year.

customers to generate advertising revenue and increase sales through a user-friendly signage system. It also includes an alert feature that can push out emergency alerts to every display. This type of technology has been long awaited by colleges, hospitals and other large institutions to help them improve security systems and get a little extra revenue from advertisers.

All that is required to run DAN is a display monitor, computer, and internet connection. Because

the technology is web-based, no special software downloads are needed. Users login to the online DAN interface where they can customize pre-designed layouts for their displays.

DAN simplifies creating, publishing, managing and sharing information. Web based design and management enables users to customize and select the display and alert messages. This inexpensive technology can be effectively used to disseminate information to a mass audience and has already been implemented at several locations on the University of Utah's campus. Because it is a software-as-a-service application hosted on Akadi servers, no IT staff is needed to run DAN on the user-end.

The company plans to expand the technology to include AkadiMatch – a service to connect advertisers with their target audiences. Akadi was helped with the efforts of the Lassonde New Venture Development Center and recently was a finalist in the Utah Entrepreneur Challenge. For more information on Akadi Technologies, visit www.akaditech.com. *



A MESSAGE FROM JACK BRITTAIN

When the University founded Tech Ventures in 2005, the founding principle was a commitment to fully integrate with the University mission. By fully integrating education, service and research into a coherent strategy driving commercialization and economic development, we expected to be the best.

This founding principle led us to build programs and an organization that involves students in every activity, supports exceptional learning opportunities for students in dozens of majors, and engages students with faculty in ways that inspire both groups.

This issue of *Innovations* features stories that inspire us and illustrate our "secret." I first learned about Professor Patrick Kiser's course talking to one of the finalists in the 2008 Tech Titans competition. I was surprised to learn the student was a freshman and even more surprised when he told me the class he had taken with Professor Keiser had produced 26 inventions, all by freshmen.

This is just one example of programs that are distinctively University of Utah experiences associated with Tech Ventures. It is our commitment to total mission integration that is the "secret." The result is distinctive programs that are life defining experiences for our students and a source of great pride for our faculty. We take great pride in bringing a few of these stories to you in each issue of *Innovations*. *

FRESHMEN STUDENTS INSPIRED TO INVENT

Patrick Kiser, professor in the department of bioengineering, asked his freshmen introductory engineering class how many of them planned on inventing something someday.

When half his students rose their hands it became clear that in order to help students reach their potential he had to teach more than theory and problem solving; Dr. Kiser had to teach ingenuity. Dr. Kiser teaches his students that the root word behind Engineering is not Engine, its "ingenuity." Students are given the opportunity to alter their path of study and participate in the INVENT! program. Students spend the semester finding solutions to real world problems. Student teams identify a lead invention that is a solution to a problem or need. They are paired with faculty mentors and perform background, patent, market and engineering research on their ideas. At the end of the semester each student in the INVENT! program has a tangible idea which they are encouraged to enter into the Tech Titans competition where many become finalists and winners.

Arriving at ideas is no simple task. Many students have to start the invention process over again several times. They may find in their patent research that their idea has already been patented or while doing market research they may find that there is not market for their idea. Either way, students are gaining experience and transforming the way they see the field of engineering. "This class teaches students how to become creative professionals on the engineering side," said Dr. Kiser, "Some people may leave this class inspired to develop careers in business, be patent attorneys, or get involved in research and development. At the end of the semester although everyone is tired from their journey, they are definitely inspired."

Next year Kiser plans to add two business workshops to the INVENT! curriculum to help students better understand the commercialization potential of their ideas. *



Have you received multiple copies of *Innovations*? Pass any extras on to others interested in The University of Utah.

JOIN THE **ONLINE** RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The Faculty Research Interest Database is a portal through which faculty across campus can share with their research interests with their campus community.

Share your research interests with the University of Utah's research community. Over 2,000 faculty members have logged in and shared their research interests with others in the University community. The faculty research website is a simple tool that helps researchers and their like-minded colleagues. With an average of over 7,000 hits per

popular database is a simple way to find collaborators for grant applications, research studies, or innovative brainstorming.

The database and its search features have already taught us a lot about our campus collaborators. With just a few clicks one can learn that at least 36 faculty members are interested in imaging, 76 have a research interest in medical devices and over 150 individuals are interested in business development. The database has also taught us that the most common second language spoken across campus is Spanish, which is closely followed by French and then German. These small statistics about our campus are only an illustration of how people across campus can come together and collaborate with people of similar interests.

online community by sharing a research statement, key words and other collaborative information. If you have logged on in the past, please take a minute and update your information. Encourage your colleagues to log in and support the ever growing community of University researchers.

The benefits of participating are significant. Industry partners looking to fund research in a particular area can easily find faculty members to call. Those looking to collaborate on research grant applications can find interdisciplinary partners. Even those people looking for someone with expertise in a geographical region can use the website search tools.

Join the online research community. Tell us a bit about your research interests at www.facultyresearch.utah.edu .*

Take a minute and join the



Innovations

Feature image courtesy of the Scientific and Computer Imaging Institute at the University of Utah.