

SUNDAY Business

A big vote of confidence

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Budding entrepreneurs at UCSB share a desire to make money ... and some of them already have.

This past week, prizes totalling \$19,000 were handed out at the Technology Management Program's 6th annual business plan competition, held on campus in the Corwin Pavilion.

Over the course of more than three hours, eight student teams made presentations, after which a panel of judges awarded the main prize of \$10,000 to Paul Fini and Ben Haskell of Inlustra Technologies.

Mr. Fini, 32, and his 27-year-old business partner, who both have completed their doctorates, outlined a plan to manufacture high-quality gallium nitride substrates to enable low-cost production of blue DVD lasers and high-brightness blue, green and white light-emitting diodes, or LEDs.

LEDs, devices for converting energy to light, increasingly are used in everything from mobile phones and high-

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Patrick Dietzen,
former Technology Management
Program Business Plan Competition Participant

density DVDs to traffic signals, advertising signs and light bulbs.

One of the keys to the technology is something called gallium nitride, which is deposited from chemical vapor as a coating of crystals that provide a durable and efficient way to display full-spectrum lighting.

The team behind Inlustra says they have proven a way of growing consistently superior-quality crystals in the laboratory at UCSB, a technology they believe will propel them to the forefront of the diodes market and generate revenue of \$44 million by 2009.

The team behind Inlustra Technologies takes the top prize at the Technology Management Program's 6th annual business plan competition — \$10,000 and ...



Clutching a giant check for \$10,000 after the event, Mr. Haskell said this success represents a huge vote of confidence in their business plan and will provide the impetus to carry on with the venture.

Though there are still many decisions to be made, "we'll definitely be moving forward with this now," he said, adding that this award will certainly help.

Inlustra will join a number of similar entrepreneurial projects from around the state at a forum in the Bay Area next month, when one of them will collect a \$250,000 investment from venture capital company Draper Fisher Jurvetson.

Omens for the embryonic company are good. The last four winners of this event have all introduced products, including Inogen's portable oxygen concentrator, and one winner, SiriGen, has just completed intellectual property negotiations in connection with methods of detecting diseases.

SiriGen, which won the competition two years ago, is combining genetic analysis and new polymer materials to develop simpler, quicker and more accurate diagnostic tools for diseases and viruses.

Patrick Dietzen, a member of the SiriGen team, said their 2003 success was tremendously significant since

it helped validate the idea and acted as a stepping stone to the next level.

"It basically changed my life," he said.

The prize of \$3,000 for the best business plan presented last week went to Amit Jardosh, Matthew Kirk and Krishna Ramachandran, the team behind Wi-Yu Network Solutions.

This company plans to design and license software that will optimize the performance of wireless mesh networks, like those used by emergency services, overcoming such problems as congestion and signal interference.

Ethan Smith, Nitin Kataria, Yanting Zhang and Jennifer Goykhman won another \$3,000 check for best idea with Datapoint, a business that would produce tactile screens to help blind and visually impaired people use computers.

During his presentation, Mr. Smith told the judges that this technology has the potential to "change the lives of over 10 million people."

The third \$3,000 check, for best pitch, went to Jared Goldschen, Benjamin Bakhshi and Tudor Barac-Matei, the team behind Nidero.

Their business plan envisaged software that would link around 250,000 privately owned ATMs with the lottery industry, enabling people to buy lottery tickets at the same time they withdraw cash.

The other four business plans presented before an audience of students and faculty, parents and members of the business and financial community, were:

- Accu-Skan (Witold Sadowski and Aida Todori): A scanning device enabling people to keep track of their food intake. Intended for those wishing to monitor what they eat for weight, fitness or diet reasons.
- VersaTour (Jay Akkad, Ilya Letuchy and Vadim Spivak): Portable devices

offering customized tours that combine the advantages of a tour guide with the freedom to roam on your own. Initially the service would target New York before expanding to eight U.S. cities plus London and Paris.

- Infantech (John Gannon and John Hohenner): Technology for monitoring the vital signs of babies using an elastic band around their waist. The wireless system tracks the infant's breathing, heart rate, temperature and sleeping position.
- Aeoleis (Bharath Ananathasubramaniam, Marlyn Bolanos, Konstantinos Rizakos and Po Wang): Compliance tools and decision support systems targeting the nation's 22,000 small and medium-sized banks, helping them to compete on an equal footing with the major banks which have access to huge IT systems.



Graduate student classmates Troy Baker and Ed Letts, left, congratulate Paul Fini, center, and Ben Haskell, winners of the \$10,000 Judge's Choice award at the Technology Management Program's annual business plan competition.

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