

UCSB grad's prize-winning idea earns him honors in London, too

12/15/05

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A UCSB graduate, now doing postgraduate studies at University College London, has won an entrepreneurship challenge there with an idea that took honors earlier in Santa Barbara.

Ethan Smith is the man behind Datapoint, a business concept to produce tactile screens to help blind and visually impaired people use computers and other mobile devices.



His idea, to generate raised dots to enable visually impaired users to read their screens in Braille, has just won the top prize of 1,000 pounds (about \$1,770) in a London competition against 31 other teams.

In May, Mr. Smith and team members Nitin Kataria, Yanting Zhang and Jennifer Goykhman won \$3,000 when Datapoint was voted best idea at the UCSB Technology Management Program's sixth annual business plan competition.

During his presentation then, Mr. Smith told the panel evaluating teams of budding entrepreneurs that the Datapoint technology has the potential to "change the lives of over 10 million people."

Mr. Smith has similarly impressed a panel of judges in England.

To win this latest award, he had to submit a short summary of the business concept, supported by an oral presentation.

The judges agreed that Datapoint "captured a valuable niche market with great long-term potential for expansion."

Mr. Smith, who earned a degree in computer engineering from UCSB, is now working towards his Ph.D. studying "man-machine interface."

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Attorney Jeffrey McKinney, left, talks with Ethan Smith about his Datapoint concept at a Technology Management Program conference at UCSB in August