

University of Alabama News

UA Teams Among Winners in Launchpad Business Competition

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TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Half of the eight finalists in a state-wide competition designed to help launch start-up companies have ties to The University of Alabama, including both the second and third place teams.

UA's top two teams will receive \$50,000 and \$25,000, respectively, for their placements in the third annual Alabama Launchpad Governor's Business Plan Competition, which attracted 36 teams statewide.

Spectrum PhenomX, a collaboration between UAB and UA designed to streamline the analysis of genetic diseases by applying high-throughput phenotyping techniques, won second place. Dr. William Gathings, director of technology transfer at UA, formed this team, led by Sharney Logan, director of business development for the UAB Center for Biophysical Science and Engineering.

Technology which provides companies a way to increase small-engine efficiency while reducing emissions is the focus of the third place team, led by a UA student. David Holt, who is pursuing both a master's degree in engineering and a juris doctorate, leads Direct Injection Flat Head Engine Co., which offers a patent-pending alternative to current carburetor-based and direct injection small engines. Team members include Dr. Scott Spear, a research engineer in UA's Alabama Institute for Manufacturing Excellence and Chris Cater, a UA School of Law student also pursuing an MBA.

A team from UAB, Innovative Composite Solutions, won this year's competition and the \$100,000 prize. BioLinx, a collaborative effort with UAB and led by UA MBA student Connie Zhang was a finalist. This team focuses on a process to allow more of a prescription drug to act before it is metabolized.

Keep the Story, designed to help busy families archive and preserve memories through the convenience of an online journal was also a finalist. UA student Mark Greene is a team member.

Dr. Dan Daly, director of UA's Alabama Institute for Manufacturing Excellence serves on Launchpad's board of directors and also works closely with many of UA's teams.

In the 2008 competition, both the first and second place teams had ties to UA as did five of the eight finalists.

Alabama Launchpad is a partnership between the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, the business community and seven public universities in the state. The competition is a vetting process to evaluate high growth start-ups and provide seed funding in the form of cash prizes to the top three. This was the competition's third year. For more information, visit www.alabamalaunchpad.com.

The University of Alabama, a student-centered research university, is in the midst of a planned, steady enrollment growth with a goal of reaching 28,000 students by 2010. This growth, which is positively impacting the campus and the state's economy, is in keeping with UA's vision to be the university of choice for the best and brightest students. UA, the state's flagship university, is an academic community united in its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Alabamians.



UA's small-engine-focused team displays its winnings. From left: Dr. Scott Spear, Chris Cater and David Holt

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