

National Capital SCAN

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\$2 million fund encourages engineers to think business

By Karen Secord

The University of Ottawa's faculty of engineering has parlayed a \$1 million anonymous donation into a \$2 million endowment fund and presented its first financial awards.

Called the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Endowment Fund, its annual awards recognize the efforts of both graduate and undergraduate students studying engineering or computer science. The school's mission is to empower future engineers and computer scientists studying at the University of Ottawa with the business savvy that will help them determine the needs of national and international industries.

PhD. student **Altar Khetani** was awarded top honours with \$15,000. Graduate students (Masters) **Somaieh Salehpour** and **Majid Najj** were recognized with \$9,000 each.

Undergraduate prizes went to **Kieran Coulter's** team (including **Sameer Valiyani**, **Daniel Collier**, **Alexander Philipp** and **Scott Sherin**) for their project KS-DAS (\$10,000), **Luc Levesseur's** team for Redwave Motion (\$7,500), and the team of **Jean-Christophe Ricard**, **Maxine Gauthier** and **Francis Hétu** for Amgems (\$5,000).



Claude Laguë

Obviously they are concerned with good quality design, but inevitably they have to be concerned with money.

The fellowships are an important part of the engineering and management departments' continuing focus on entrepreneurship. Both departments are committed to fostering "a culture of business and entrepreneurship" among their students.

New professorships — such as the Deloitte Professorship in the Management of Growth Enterprises and the RBC Financial Group Professor in the Commercialization of Innovation — and a growing core of academics and researchers specializing in entrepreneurship, innovation and growth have been building momentum for uOttawa's School of Management.

Participating students submitted their proposals in January, and worked on their projects until the third week in March before making their written submissions. Project presentation, evaluation and announcement of awards took place on April 14. The official awards presentation will be in June.

Claude Laguë, dean of uOttawa's Faculty of Engineering, says that what impressed the judges were the winning students' strong business cases.

"We looked for strong business proposals that focused on the business side of their ideas rather than on the technology," explains Laguë. "They needed to sell the technology or the service, and not the science behind it."

By emphasizing entrepreneurship the school's goal is to better equip students with the technical and non-technical skills they will require to be successful in the marketplace.

Four bi-weekly workshops covered an essential element of entrepreneurship/venture creation. The workshops were followed by an open Q&A session and an onsite consultation.

"Most engineers end up for a good part of their careers being concerned with financial issues," explains **Bruce Firestone**, the University of Ottawa's first Executive-in-Residence at the Telfer School of Management. "Obviously they are concerned with good quality design, but inevitably they have to be concerned with money."

The Fund also allowed for creation of the Entrepreneurship Bridges Lecture Series, designed to offer unique opportunities to connect 'entrepreneurial' students with guest entrepreneurs. Bruce Firestone launched the lecture series in March 2007. The second lecture in the series was given by Tom Goguen of Grid Iron Software in September 2007. Goguen is the former VP of Sun Microsystems. Jim Roche, former CEO of Tundra, delivered the third lecture in the series to approximately 150 students and staff in March.

nuggets



OAM bought

Nitro Microsystems Inc. acquires Toronto-based **OAM Network Solutions** for an undisclosed sum. According to Nitro, the deal is a step towards its goal to be the largest independent managed services provider in Canada, giving the Ottawa company access to OAM's clients in the GTA while broadening offerings to include OAM's network security, IP-based telephony, and network storage and infrastructure management solutions. "We believe the market is ripe for continued consolidation. Nitro is actively looking to grow its market share both organically and through additional acquisitions," says Nitro CEO **Larry Poirier**. "OAM Network Solutions' certifications, professional services expertise and client base complement Nitro and collectively promote our image as a national player with a strong local touch." The company says it won't cut jobs as a result of the acquisition, but rather it will add new sales and service positions due to anticipated growth. "We have seen a lot of change in the market over the past few years," notes Mr. Poirier. "Companies who cannot adapt to the market conditions will likely suffer. As a forward-thinking company, Nitro Microsystems is always looking for ways to grow and better serve its customers."



Acquisition pays off

Seprotech Systems Inc. signs new contracts worth \$1.6 million as it reaps the benefits of its October purchase of **PJ Hannah Equipment Corp.**, which is responsible for half of the new business. "This is a strong initial endorsement of the acquisition and management's strategy to expand through highly focused organic growth combined with strategic partnerships and acquisitions," says Seprotech's CEO **Martin J. Hauschild**. Seprotech bought BC-based PJ Hannah for an announced \$1.15 million in cash and stock, contingent upon it meeting certain performance marks.



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