



SCIENTISTS SEE FRUITS OF THEIR RESEARCH

Food and Health Entrepreneurship Academy Opens Doors to the Market

UC Davis doctoral student Daniela Barile (left) and Imran Pasha, a doctoral student at Washington State University, celebrate a successful team project. The academy, says, Pasha, “enlightened my mind to think in a very different and practical way.”

Vibeke Orlie, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen’s Department of Food Science, was curious whether her research in the lab could make a real-world difference. Her idea: a low-sugar, low-fat dairy snack based on high-pressure technology that enables faster gelation of milk products—and eliminates both the need to ferment the milk and the resulting sour taste.

In February Orlie joined nearly 50 scientists and researchers from across the U.S. and northern Europe for the inaugural UC Davis Food and Health Entrepreneurship Academy (FHEA). The week-long business development intensive drew Ph.D. students, post-doctoral researchers, faculty and industry scientists interested in learning how to commercialize their research in the fields of foods for health, nutrition and wellness.

Co-presented by the UC Davis Center for Entrepreneurship and the Foods for Health Institute, the academy introduced the scientists to a world very different from their labs. Workshops—taught by UC faculty, top venture capitalists, angel investors, entrepreneurs and attorneys specializing in early-stage ventures—focused on networking, intellectual property, market and business validation, elevator pitches, development strategies, and the logistics of building a team and establishing an organization.

Participants teamed up, developing a hypothetical or real product based on their research.

Mentoring sessions with veteran entrepreneurs helped the teams refine their materials and talking points. By the academy’s last day, they were ready to pitch their products—new ideas ranging from a supplement to alleviate premenstrual syndrome to a process that reduces dangerous biofilm on pipes in food production plants. A panel of industry executives listened carefully, then grilled them with questions about patent searches, pre-seed testing and market intelligence. The experience mimicked what it is like to pitch a venture to a prospective investor.

“When you’re in the lab, it can seem impossible to envision the isolated research as part of a complete product,” Orlie said. Today she is beginning to taste test her dairy snack with parents and their children.

She also plans to follow up with PepsiCo, whose representative at the academy expressed interest in applying Orlie’s high-pressure technology in the company’s product portfolio.

“I would never have gotten a contact of this caliber had I not participated in FHEA,” Orlie said. “It is through new networks like this that true innovation happens.”

“Seeing my research through the eyes of an entrepreneur instead of through the eyes of a scientist has been like landing on another planet.”

—PETER STOUGAARD

Associate Professor, Department of Ecology
University of Denmark

Offering words of advice as the academy's keynote speaker, venture capitalist William Rosenzweig urged participants to “anticipate and articulate true unmet needs—work and innovate with a deep sense of purpose, commitment and values.” Rosenzweig spoke from experience. After cutting his entrepreneurial teeth as co-founder and CEO of The Republic of Tea, he served as an early Odwalla executive. Now he's co-founder and managing partner of San Francisco-based Physic Ventures, an early-stage fund focused on health, wellness and sustainable living investments.

The academy was sponsored by Unilever Corporate Ventures, PepsiCo and Innovation Center Denmark. Jim Stalder, a research scientist with PepsiCo, who participated in the academy, said the intensive program is a valuable training ground for academics looking to move into industry. “The information presented for the development of individual entrepreneurs is very applicable to the product development cycle at large corporations.” 📌

Applications for the 2010 Food and Health Entrepreneurship Academy will be available this summer @

>> <http://entrepreneurship.ucdavis.edu/health>

Emerging New Ventures

Through innovative business development programs and entrepreneurship academies, the UC Davis Center for Entrepreneurship has helped nurture and network a number of successful start-ups. Here are few examples:



Helping to Feed the World

Dripteck is building a low-cost, low-tech drip-irrigation system for small-scale farmers in Africa and Asia. The angel-backed start-up recently advanced to the final round of the 2009 Stanford Social E-Challenge. The top three companies will share \$50,000. Dripteck founder Peter Frykman (pictured in Ethiopia meeting with local farmers) is an alumnus of the 2007 Green Technology Entrepreneurship Academy.

>> <http://driptechnologies.com>

Making Conservation Sexy

As a Business Development Fellow at the Center for Entrepreneurship in 2007–2008, UC Davis doctoral candidate Siva Gunda helped launch WickKool, a retrofit device that improves rooftop air conditioner performance up to 5 percent by recycling condensation. *Fast Company* recently wrote: “WickKool is considered one of the standout ideas developed at Davis; within five months of the first napkin sketch, Wal-Mart was trying it out atop a Sacramento store.”

>> http://greentechnologyinnovations.com/wickkool_unit

Greener Plastic

Kristen Matsumara, Casey McGrath and John Bissell met as undergraduates in UC Davis' civil and environmental engineering program. Following the 2008 Green Technology Entrepreneurship Academy they launched MicroMidas, using seed funding to secure lab space in West Sacramento and begin testing their technology to convert municipal wastewater into biodegradable plastic. MicroMidas recently placed second in the Yolo Business Ascent Competition and will participate in the statewide Business Ascent championship in San Diego in November.

>> <http://www.micromidas.com>

Demystifying Blood Clots

Francesco Viola, an alumna of the 2008 UC Entrepreneurship Academy, is moving forward with HemoSonics, a portable diagnostic system to rapidly quantify blood-clotting disorders. HemoSonics recently received a \$250,000 seed investment to expand the clinical data set and further product development.

>> <http://hemosonics.com>