GREEN Entrepreneurial internship program

Sustainable Technology & Green Manufacturing

summer 2012

An ALEPSCoR Outreach Initiative at the University of Alabama
This summer, I have done something that normally takes months to do; I started my own business. So have the other student interns who participated in the Entrepreneurial Internship Program at the University of Alabama. In 30 days, we created a business that was both creative and green. We wrote business plans, produced our products and endured the many other trials of starting our own companies.

The EIP program was founded by Dr. Karen Boykin, the assistant director for the Center for Green Manufacturing at UA. She has worked for over 20 years in research and education with a focus on sustainability and green technologies. During her time with ALEPSCOR, Dr. Boykin has created a number of novel educational activities, such as this one, that introduce students to civic responsibility. And she also found time to serve as the team leader of one of the EIP teams!

I learned about this program while still basking in the fact that I was about to graduate from high school just one week later. However, I did not want to spend my entire summer lounging around the house watching cartoon re-runs. I wanted to try new things and, most importantly, I wanted to be creative. Little did I know, I would soon get the chance to do one of the most creative things I’ve ever done: make paper. (And may I say, it is a lot harder than it looks!)

The other student interns that I’ve met this summer are some of the brightest people I have ever known. Whether making lamps from bamboo, soap and fertilizer from industrial byproducts, or T-shirts that clean themselves as well as the environment, everyone had innovative ideas and vision. Of course, none of it would have been possible without our advisors. I know I speak for all of the interns when I give a big thank you to our mentors and team leaders for everything they did for us this past month. We hope to keep in touch in the future as our businesses grow or as we decide on different paths to follow.

And of course, thank you to Dr. Boykin for giving us the opportunity to be a part of this amazing program.

James Banks
Intern, Sprout Paper
Led by Scott McCormick, Doug Lindsay and Greg Mick of Denali Organics, two teams found marketable solutions for industrial byproducts. Intern Sela McDonald, with the help of mentors Whitney Hough and Sloan McCrary, started The Dixie Glycerin Soap Company, which produces soap from a byproduct of biodiesel.

Intern William Layfield worked with Denali to develop a company that will sell organic fertilizer made from a byproduct of local catfish production facilities.

Team PB2, led by Dr. Michael Baran of SAIC, found a renewable energy solution to the public health challenge of mosquito-borne diseases. Interns Kalynn Pruitt and Austin Finnen, with mentor Dr. Patrick Barber of the Center for Green Manufacturing at UA, developed a patent-pending mosquito trap powered by renewable energy sources that create a useful byproduct. The team is investigating the use of sustainable materials such as bamboo for the construction of the product.

“I’m thankful for this opportunity, and hope to learn about alternative energy, as well as successful entrepreneurship.” — Kalynn Pruitt
The 141 Team developed original T-shirt designs, then set up an enterprise in which, for every T-shirt sold, a second shirt is provided to a needy child. Interns Jordan Banks, Timothy Holley II, Thomas Mark Johnson II, Elizabeth Imsand and Christen Causby, working with faculty advisor Dr. Karen Boykin and mentors Dr. Virginia Wimberly and Kathleen Kirkpatrick Nash, also developed a way to treat the shirts with an environmentally-friendly nanoparticle, making them moisture, odor and dirt-resistant.

Sprout tackled the issue of wastewater produced from the traditional process of paper-making. The team, led by environmental engineer Jonathan Bonner, interns James Banks and Jordan Pelt, and mentors Kate Kotan and Redi Sileshi, developed a way to make sustainable paper using locally sourced bamboo and embedded with seeds. Once the paper has been used, it can be planted to grow wildflowers, vegetables or a variety of herbs. The wastewater from the paper-making process is then run through an ecological filter, rendering the water clean and reusable without the use of chemicals.

Intern Jordan Banks got the inspiration for the 141 Team’s project after recognizing that underprivileged children in his hometown of Greensboro frequently wore the same clothes to school.
The 2012 Alabama Green Entrepreneurial Internship Program consisted of five teams of high school and undergraduate students, each aiming to develop a sustainable, eco-friendly product or process tied to Alabama’s economic growth. The goal was to spur new business creation in Hale County, Ala. and the Black Belt region of West Alabama.

During the month of June 2012, EIP student interns were offered the opportunity gain unique entrepreneurial skills by working with faculty at the University of Alabama, industry CEOs, leaders from the private sector, as well as entrepreneurs from a broad spectrum of companies in Alabama.

The skills that the students acquired include brainstorming ideas for innovative and emerging technologies, products, processes and design; writing business or social plans; marketing materials and promoting ideas; obtaining funding; registering with governmental agencies; filing DBA paperwork; learning about insurance, taxes; creating websites, interacting with the business community; developing marketing materials, selling products; and launching a company. They also had to apply theory learned in their classes, including basic science, design, engineering, and business principles.

The EIP program is under the direction of Dr. Karen Boykin of the Center for Green Manufacturing, with business instruction from entrepreneurship professor David Ford and sustainable business consultant Karen Schlesinger.

To learn more about the program, visit us online at www.eip.ua.edu