

Starting Something New

If innovation is good for business, then the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering is doing its part to keep both Alabama's and the nation's economies going strong.

Auburn University's Office of Technology Transfer recently announced the formation of four new start-up companies based on technologies developed within the college. Two of the start-ups will be based in the Auburn area.

"Historically, we have helped launch two new firms per year," says Brian Wright, associate director for commercialization in the Office of Technology Transfer. "Four out of one college in such a short time is unprecedented for Auburn."

According to Wright, a lot of this activity can be credited directly to Dean Larry Benefield and his team's support for research and technology transfer efforts. Engineering faculty account for almost half of the University's research expenditures. They also understand the value of licensing inventions and are active participants in the start-up process.

This year that support included participation in the inaugural "Alabama Launchpad" event, a university-centered state-wide business plan competition. Auburn engineering placed two teams in the finals of the events, including MCR, a carpet recycling company, and OcuMedic, the winner of the \$100,000 competition.

"There's no question that Alabama Launchpad had a big impact on our start-up activity this year," says Wright. "OcuMedic was launched directly from its involvement in the competition, and MCR certainly received a big boost in recognition and contacts."

"The commercialization of intellectual properties developed by Auburn University faculty represents a significant funding component as the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering moves to new levels of excellence," notes Larry Benefield, dean of engineering. "The technologies on which these companies are based represent truly innovative and forward-focused research with real-world applications."

Ready for Launch — Alabama Launchpad is a not-for-profit organization formed in 2006 by six Alabama research universities and the state's business community to support entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Founders include Auburn University, Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Huntsville, the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama Foundation.

The foundation is a privately funded economic development organization supported by 68 of the state's leading companies dedicated to quality economic growth in Alabama.

side note

The four newly formed companies include:

- ❑ Aunigma Network Solutions Corp. (Atlanta): Multiple network threat protection plus unmatched performance compared to competing internet security offerings
- ❑ Modular Carpet Recycling, Inc. (Auburn): Turn-key plants that utilize a carbon dioxide-based process for efficient recycling of nylon from used carpets
- ❑ Applications Quest, LLC (Fairfax, Va.): Clustering software that allows universities to realize their diversity objectives in a manner that is both effective and in conformity with legal standards
- ❑ OcuMedic, Inc. (Auburn): A drug delivery and medical device company that creates new contact lenses to deliver medications to the surface of the eye



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