

## Winning Team in MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge Attracts the Attention of Venture Investors

The inaugural round of the MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge came to a close as the competition finals drew a full house at the 2006 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting. Attendees gathered to see how the Society is helping its members develop the entrepreneurial skills that get their ideas out of the laboratory and directly into the marketplace. The three finalist teams pitched their materials technology-based business plans to a panel of six judges from the venture capital community. The University of Michigan team of Jungwoo Lee, Oleg Svintsitski, Meghan Cuddihy, and Rewadee Chaihetphon, with team mentor Nicholas Kotov, accepted the grand prize of \$3,000 and a laser-etched crystal award for their business plan, "Standard 3D Scaffolds for Stem Cell Research." Having attracted the attention of potential investors who participated as judges and sponsors of the program, the team members are now engaged in communications that will help them as they work to raise their first round of venture capital funding. MRS is looking forward to

following the team, TrifectaCell Inc., as it moves its product, Perfecta 3D, into the marketplace.

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The MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge, an international competition, was launched in September 2005. The competition is an educational program designed to

- foster entrepreneurship within the MRS membership by providing hands-on opportunities for MRS scientists and engineers to learn about business formation and venture capital fundraising;
- create networking and collaboration opportunities between MRS members and business school students; and
- create a generation of materials researchers with the vision, tools, and person-

al connections needed to shorten the time to market for major materials innovations.

To compete in the MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge, student and professional materials scientists and engineers were paired with business school students to develop concepts for materials-based startup companies. A total of 20 submissions were received and evaluated by the 18 judges who were recruited from the venture capital community. Once the three finalist teams were announced, all participants received detailed feedback on their entry presentations, including scores and comments from the judges as well as how each team rated against the other teams.

The three finalist teams received travel funding to pitch their materials technology-based business plans in person at the 2006 MRS Spring Meeting in San Francisco. Following the presentations, the participants enjoyed a celebratory reception and dinner, where they were introduced to the creators of the competition, judges, sponsors, MRS officers, and MRS executive staff. Alan Hurd, MRS vice president, presented the grand prize to the University of Michigan team members. The finalist team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—Helen Chuang, Lakshman Pernenkil, Rani Bose, Kenneth Messier, and Liz Su ("MAD Nanolayers: Polymer Coatings for Multi-Agent Delivery")—and the University of Albany finalist team of Emily Riley and Harry Efstathiadis ("Thermoelectric Generators: Powering Implantable Biomedical Devices") were presented awards as well.

The 2006 MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge was sponsored by Adams Capital Management; Dow Chemical Company, Corporate Venture Capital; CMEA Ventures; the Materials Research Institute, the Pennsylvania State University; Sigma-Aldrich; and Tessera.

The 2007 MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge is now open for registration. **The team registration deadline is December 15, 2006, and the entry deadline is January 22, 2007.** More information on the competition can be accessed at Web site [www.mrs.org/entrepreneurs](http://www.mrs.org/entrepreneurs) or by e-mailing [entrepreneurs@mrs.org](mailto:entrepreneurs@mrs.org). 



Participants in the MRS Entrepreneurship Challenge enjoy a celebratory reception and dinner after giving their presentations at the 2006 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting in San Francisco in April. The winning team from the University of Michigan joins William Frezza (Adams Capital Management), co-organizer and judge of the competition: (left to right) Team mentor Nicholas Kotov, Rewadee Chaihetphon, Frezza, Meghan Cuddihy, Jungwoo Lee, and Daryush Ila who was a member of the competition task force. Not shown: Team member Oleg Svintsitski.



### Dates to Remember

September 1, 2006  
December 15, 2006  
January 22, 2007

Competition Start Date  
Team Registration Deadline  
Entry Postmark Deadline

## Kevin Whittlesey Named 2006–2007 OSA/MRS Congressional Fellow

Kevin Whittlesey has been named the OSA/MRS Congressional Science and Engineering Fellow for 2006–2007. His term begins in September. As a recipient of this one-year appointment, sponsored jointly by the Materials Research Society and the Optical Society of America, Whittlesey will work as a special legislative assistant on the staff of a member of Congress or a congressional committee.

Whittlesey is currently working for Booz Allen Hamilton with the life sciences group of the Global Defense Team. As part of the Supply Chain Management System for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), he is providing USAID with technical evaluations of antiviral drugs for deployment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While conducting his doctoral research developing a biomaterials-mediated gene delivery system to treat spinal cord injury, Whittlesey said he was exposed to "the necessity of balancing social consciousness with research policy." Whittlesey said that close colleagues using embryonic stem cells in their research were concerned about the effects of policy developments on their work. "This illustrated the importance of maintaining public dialogue to delicately balance moral, ethical, and personal viewpoints on emerging technologies, while preserving research freedom so that innovation is not stifled," he said.

"That realization," said Whittlesey, "sparked my interest in research communications, to help the public understand the potential benefits of research while ensuring that scientists conduct their work in a socially and ethically responsible manner."



Kevin Whittlesey

Whittlesey found himself first communicating science across interdisciplinary research fields when describing his doctoral work to neuroscientists and navigating through national and international research collaborations. His research led him to the fields of tissue engineering, drug delivery, genetic engineering, immunology, electrophysiology, and stem cell biology. During his tenure at the National Academies as a Christine Mirzayan Fellow with the Committee on Science, Technology, and Law, Whittlesey researched and authored new study proposals to examine university–corporate partnerships and the policy implications regarding international research collaborations.

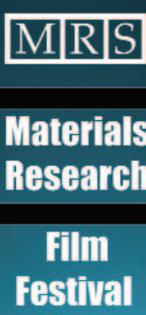
Whittlesey is ultimately interested in developing science educational outreach and communications programs. He believes his tenure as an OSA/MRS

Fellow will provide him with broad experience in the policy/legislative arena, which he will then implement in science outreach projects.

After earning his doctorate degree from Northwestern University in 2005 and completing the 10-week fellowship program at the National Academies, Whittlesey entered a postdoctoral fellowship with the Stem Cell Biology Group at Aastrom Biosciences in Michigan. His postdoctoral work focused on examining the potential for stem cells derived from adult human bone marrow to regenerate bone for clinical applications.

His awards and honors include a National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health, a University Scholar Award from Northwestern University, and a Neuroscience Scholar Award and Outstanding Oral Presentation in Biomedical Sciences from the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). Whittlesey has been involved with numerous science outreach programs, including local and regional science fair judging, tutoring science students at public schools, career mentorship for high school science students, and conducting chemistry magic shows for charity fundraising events.

Along with his membership in SACNAS, Whittlesey is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society for Cell Biology, the Materials Research Society, and the Society for Neuroscience. He has a patent pending on biodegradable scaffolds. MRS



**The 2006 MRS Fall Meeting announces its first-ever**

## Materials Research Film Festival —A Competition

- ▶ seeking short films or film segments on materials science that can teach, explain, amaze, amuse or fascinate
- ▶ both professionally produced and amateur films welcome
- ▶ open to all meeting attendees and their home institution

**Deadline for Completed Entry Form—  
October 1, 2006**

For more information, including film formats and submission guidelines, visit [www.mrs.org/f06\\_film\\_festival](http://www.mrs.org/f06_film_festival)

- ▶ Selected entries will be on display in the Exhibit Hall of the Hynes Convention Center and in a dedicated viewing room.
- ▶ Meeting attendees will vote for their favorite films and an appointed panel of judges comprised of senior materials scientists and students will choose the winners from among the highest vote-getters.
- ▶ Monetary awards will be presented to first-, second-, and third-place winners in each of two categories – Professional and Amateur.
- ▶ The winning films will be shown in a special "Film Festival" session of Symposium X on Thursday, November 30.