



News Release

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Giant Vision Winners Share Strong Connections to University Research

PIERRE, S.D. – Three winners in last week’s Governor’s Giant Vision Business Competition are new start-up companies incubated by South Dakota’s growing focus on university-based research.

The winner of the top \$20,000 prize in the competition was CalxAqua, LLC, a Rapid City-based firm that has developed a proprietary, patented technology to remove arsenic and heavy metals from drinking water, using limestone-based absorbent materials. The technology is driven by research conducted at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

Second and third place in the competition went to companies from Brookings, both with strong ties to research under way at South Dakota State University. Second-place Prairie AquaTech utilizes proprietary technology to develop a fish meal replacement, using South Dakota crops like soybeans, that reduces the use of marine-derived resources currently used in aqua-feed production. Tranzderm Solutions, which finished third in the competition, has developed a medical release application designed to solve current market challenges associated with the delivery of drugs to the skin.

“Each of these companies has already partnered with established industry partners, and demonstrated the potential to add significant value to existing resources exported around the U.S. and the world from South Dakota,” said Paul Turman, system vice president for research and economic development at the South Dakota Board of Regents. Turman, who served as one of the Giant Vision judges, said the committee was impressed with several companies’ very strong connections to university-based research. “This is just another outgrowth of the state’s ongoing efforts to ratchet up partnerships involving public universities and local economic development, resulting in research that leads to technology transfer and commercialization,” Turman said.

The Governor’s Giant Vision business awards were created as an opportunity for entrepreneurs to compete for seed money and a chance to achieve their dream of starting a successful business. Giant Vision also features a student awards competition.

SkinBait, a proprietary, state-of-the-art fishing lure developed by students Aaron Zaug and Melisa Rudd from SDSU shared the top prize with another team from Sioux Falls. Third place in the student competition went to Hay Camp Brewing Co., represented by Sam Papendick and Karl Koth of SDSMT. Fourth place was Order IT, a proposal developed by Samuel Konstant and Nathan Souvignier of USD.