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In the News

Students win Breakthru!

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SACKVILLE, NB — Mount Allison University commerce students Joshua Hamilton, Niel MacIntyre, and Sally Ng representing ChemGreen Innovation have won the jackpot — the top prize of \$125,000 in the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation Breakthru New Brunswick Business Plan Competition. The students prepared a business plan for ChemGreen Innovation that stems from several years of research of Mount Allison chemistry professor, Dr. Khashayar Ghandi focussing on environmentally-friendly ways to create polymers, which plastics are made from.

The New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF), which ran the competition, supports the development of innovation by investing in early stage innovative-led companies in New Brunswick. The students' proposal was selected with five others from 80 applications, in the first stage of the competition.

Hamilton, MacIntyre, and Ng could hardly believe their good fortune. "The NBIF support for aspiring New Brunswick entrepreneurs through start-up capital, mentoring, and professional services will help to make ChemGreen Innovation a successful business," said Ng. "I would also like to thank Dr. Farooqi (commerce) and Dr. Ghandi for guiding us in this process. We couldn't have done it without them."

ChemGreen Innovation has developed a new environmentally friendly ways to create polymers- the substance from which plastics are made. This new green chemistry would allow the plastics manufacturing industry to produce green and energy-efficient products. Dr. Ghandi's science research at both TRIUMF national laboratory and Mount Allison University has put his team at the frontier of knowledge of free radical chemistry with applications in polymer chemistry. This knowledge has gradually evolved to an applied research, which is the main idea behind the ChemGreen Innovation. This applied research was carried out by honours student Kyle Greenway, focussing on an environmentally friendly production of plastics within the realm of green chemistry which is one of the themes of Dr. Ghandi's research. He and Kyle Greenway has developed this novel process and Kyle has already made several novel polymers and in one case with almost no waste.

The commerce students entered the competition as part of the senior commerce course "Venture Capital and the Finance of Innovation" taught by Dr. Nauman Farooqi. Commenting on the students' win Dr. Farooqi, said, "This outcome is the best case scenario I could have hoped for when I was designing this course last year. This unique partnership between our students, Mount Allison researchers, and the Office of Research Services has shown the tremendous potential for collaborative work that can be accomplished at Mount Allison."

The prize, \$100,000 in equity financing and \$25,000 in in-kind professional services, was presented to the students and researchers at an awards dinner on March 25th hosted by the NBIF. The students went through a rigorous three-stage process, including participating in the Breakthru Bootcamp, culminating when they and five other teams pitched their business plan to a panel of judges.

It seems that the cliché that entrepreneurs can never rest is true as the team now has another big pitch on April 1st when they will present their plan to four venture capitalists who are coming to the Mount Allison campus.

Another group, Mount Allison commerce students, Majd Chami, Allyson England, Petr Dargie, and Joselyn MacLellan, working with Dr. Farooqi and Dr. Andrew Grant in chemistry, will also be pitching their business plan for

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Kasis Energy Inc next week. Kasis Energy Inc., established by Dr. Grant, is engaged in the research and development of novel superconducting organic polymers. Such materials are used in many modern technologies, especially those associated with very strong magnets such as MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) instruments in hospitals.

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Photo caption (left to right): Sophie Thériault, Knowledge Transfer Officer, student Sally Ng, chemistry professor Dr. Khashayar Ghandi, students Josh Hamilton, and Niel MacIntyre celebrate winning the NBIF Breakthru Business Plan competition for ChemGreen Innovation.

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