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Michigan Universities Boost Commercialization, Create Entrepreneurs

A program to help Michigan's public universities create new entrepreneurs and speed commercialization of research is finding success just one year after making its first grants to universities around the state, officials from the Michigan Initiative for Innovation and Entrepreneurship consortium, and researchers said Wednesday at a news conference at the State Capitol.

"MIIE is having a tremendous impact at universities who have research projects that require additional funding to move them toward commercialization," said Marvin Parnes, Associate Vice President for Research and Executive Director of Research Administration, University of Michigan. "Our efforts have allowed important research projects continue that could one day create much-needed jobs and companies in Michigan."

Parnes' comments came as MIIE announced \$1.5 million of additional funding for 25 projects at public universities, the third round of funding for projects across Michigan. To date MIIE has provided \$3.4 million in funding to help commercialize 29 university-born research projects and 25 projects to encourage entrepreneurship throughout the state.

MIIE is succeeding in creating innovative opportunities for students to become entrepreneurs, said Joel Rash, manager of The Launch Pad, which is hosting a student business "hatchery" at the University of Michigan-Flint. The Launch Pad received \$45,000 from MIIE last year, and is one of several entrepreneurship programs funded by MIIE.

"This difficult economy has created tremendous opportunities for smart, agile young start-ups," Rash said. "Recapturing mid-Michigan's entrepreneurial heritage is essential to our future, and this effort is a crucial first step."

The university's intensive support for the students' business ideas has borne fruit, building capacity among new tech firms, creating graphic design and video production service companies, and providing support for streamlined processes for Tier 3 and 4 auto suppliers.

Western Michigan University used \$125,093 from last year's funding to move toward commercialization of a high-volume production process for printing electronic circuits -- a natural expansion of the university's long-standing expertise in traditional printing techniques. The MIIE funding has helped pay for improvements to a printing press to make this transition possible, as well as for students who have helped make modification, run samples and, currently, test those samples.

"The early signs are that this innovation can be turned into a commercial application," said Marian Rebros, a WMU researcher who has been overseeing the project. "The MIIE funding was critical to our being able to move this process from idea to patent, and soon, we believe, to a new employment opportunity for our state."

"Michigan's public universities are uniquely positioned to help transform Michigan's economy," said Jim Baker, director of technology and economic development at Michigan Technological University. "MIIE is carefully targeting its funding to maximize our impact, particularly in the early stages of commercialization, when risk is high but opportunity can be explored with tactical funding. That's where MIIE is becoming so effective."

MIIE was announced last summer to foster as many as 200 new Michigan start-ups over the next decade by partnering Michigan's philanthropic resources with university and private business resources to help commercialize university research, and strengthen ties between small business, industry and academia. The organization's goal is to raise \$75 million from foundations to bridge the gap between university research and commercial development and foster as many as 200 new Michigan start-ups over the next decade.

The New Economy Initiative for Southeast Michigan is one of MIIE's contributors, having given \$1.5 million to support its efforts earlier in the year.

"MIIE's efforts to speed the commercialization of research university and foster a culture of entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important in today's economy," said David Egner, Interim Director of the New Economy Initiative for Southeast Michigan. "These carefully vetted, smartly targeted projects to diversify Michigan's economy and encourage more entrepreneurs are vital."

Among the projects announced in MIIE's third round of grants are the development of high-performance, sustainable polymer composites for packaging; a Partnership between a Michigan university, General Motors and others to explore innovative

powertrain and instrumentation concepts; and a summer student start-up company formation program.

Two-thirds of MIIIE grants go to provide “gap funding” to guide university-born ideas along the commercialization path, toward venture-capitalist investment. The other third is used to build a culture of entrepreneurialism among students, faculty and industry in Michigan.

The MIIIE draws on the creative output of Michigan's 15 public universities, which together bring more than \$1.5 billion in R&D funds into the state each year. For more details, go to www.pcsu.org/miie.

Here's a list of MIIIE Recipients for the spring-summer 2009 funding period.

Industry and Economic Engagement Fund

An investigation of Synergetic Effects between Various Hydride Phases in Hydrogen Storage Materials, Wayne State University, \$61,576, Lori Simoes, Yi Liu, Kwo Young

Central Michigan University Research Services, Central Michigan University, \$17,450, Robert Brentin, Janine Janosky, Scott McNaught, Brad Swanson

Development of a Trilateral Partnership Between Michigan Tech, AVL, and GM with an Integral Laboratory to Explore and Incubate Innovative Powertrain and Instrumentation Concepts, Michigan Technological University, \$100,000, John Diebel, Jeremy Worm, Jeffrey Naber, Jason Biough; Gred Hopton (AVL)

Enhancing Commercialization of Low-Energy X-ray Food Irradiation, Michigan State University, \$80,256, Sanghyup Jeong, Bradley Marks, Elliot Ryser

Talent Retention and Entrepreneurship Education Fund

E2 Challenge – Summer Student Start-up Company Formation Program, Wayne State University, \$100,000, Eric Stief

Empowering The Next ENTrepreneurial GENeration (EnGen) in Mid Michigan, University of Michigan-Flint (lead institute), Central Michigan University, Michigan State University, Saginaw Valley State University (with Kettering University), \$35,000, John Callewaert

Innovation and Entrepreneurial Leadership Initiatives, Lake Superior State University, \$8,000, Ken Hemming, Carol Andary, Valerie Filek and Linda Schmitigal

The Entrepreneurship Academy at Northern Michigan University, Northern Michigan University, \$25,000, Cynthia Prosen and Fred Joyal

Student-led Consulting Services for Business Development, Talent Retention and Entrepreneurship. Michigan Technological University, \$35,000, Jim Baker, Robert Mark and Jonathan Leinonen

Technological Commercialization Fund

Life Sciences Projects

Development and Validation of a zRT-PCF Classifier for Lung Cancer Prognosis, University of Michigan, \$41,674, Wayne Harvey and David Beer

Flex Dex Surgical Device, University of Michigan, \$63,427, Wayne Harvey, Shorya Awtar and James Geiger

Commercialization of Pathway Express, Wayne State University, \$50,000, Anne DiSante and Sorin Draphici

Photon Affinity - Commercialization of a novel photonic crystal instrument for detecting intermolecular binding, University of Michigan, \$79,950, Wayne Harvey, James Baker, Theodore Norris, Jing Yong Ye, and David Olson

Translational development of a hydrogel for tendon repair, Michigan Technological University, \$28,075, Michael Morley, Ryan Gilbert and Jagi Gill

Pre-clinical development of non-covalent proteasome inhibitors for the treatment of multiple myeloma, Michigan State University, \$57,500, Mike Poterala, Jetze Tepe, Justin McCormick and Thomas Collet

TruEnamel - Synthetic Dental Enamel, University of Michigan, \$59,430, Wayne Harvey and Brian Clarkson

Physical Sciences Projects

Commercialization of welding process monitoring system, University of Michigan, \$86,700, Andrew McColm, Jyoti Mazumder, Lijun Song and Seung Hwan Lee

High Performance Insulation using Agricultural Waste Byproduct, University of Michigan, \$88,700, Andrew McColm, Richard Lane and Min Kim

Development of a Hydrophobic Coating and Application to Stamp Sand, Michigan Technological University, \$62,512, Jim Baker, Jiann-Yang Hwang, Domenic Popko and Bowen Li

High-Performance Sustainable Polymer Composites for Packaging, Michigan State University, \$80,000, Brad Shaw, Krishnamurthy Jayaraman, Karen Bantel and Tie Lan (Nanocor, Inc)

Thermally Stable, Volatile Atomic Layer Deposition Precursors for Transition Metal Oxide Thin Films for the Semiconductor Industry, Wayne State University, \$125,175, Lori Simoes and Charles Winter

Self-Healing Polymers and Coatings, Eastern Michigan University, \$19,993, Brian Anderson, Philip Rufe and Jamil Baghdachi

Prototype Development and Market Research for Targeted Products using MSU-UM-Patented Joining Technology, Michigan State University, \$49,713, Brad Shaw, David S. Grummon, John Schwartz, Roger Calantone, Xueling Fei, and John Shaw

Engineered Biobased Curable Coatings for Wood, Metals, and Bioplastics, Michigan State University, \$100,000, Brad Shaw and Ramani Narayan

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