

Two CEC teams win NSF I-Corps grants

By Elizabeth Garami

Congratulations to two FIU faculty teams, both from the College of Engineering and Computing (CEC), for receiving the National Science Foundation's (NSF) prestigious Innovation Corps Teams (I-Corps) grants!

Dr. Shekhar Bhansali, Alcatel-Lucent Professor and Chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, is the principal investigator (PI) of a successful I-Corps team that includes Kelly Mesa, doctoral student, as the entrepreneurial lead, and Alison Tanner, Entrepreneur in Residence at the Florida Institute for the Commercialization of Public Research. With Ms. Tanner serving as the I-Corps Mentor, the team's proposal to study the commercial potential of a cortisol detection system earned an impressive third place among the 24 teams in their recent I-Corps cohort.

participate in the I-Corps teams program, a faculty member must be a current NSF grantee or the recipient of a NSF award within the past five years.

While I-Corps funds do not support research activities, the short six month \$50,000 awards provide faculty, students and mentors with training in accelerated entrepreneurial skills that are based on the Lean LaunchPad methodology. LaunchPad is widely recognized as a model program used by the NSF, and most recently by the NIH, on development of business pitches based on real-world validation of the business hypotheses regarding potential markets. The I-Corps program facilitates creation of start-up companies and improves chances for licensing opportunities as well as SBIR/STTR grants.

I-Corps teams consist of a Principal Investigator on the eligible NSF award and an Entrepreneurial Lead, who can be a post-doc or a student who is the team member leading the team's efforts to explore the commercial potential of the NSF funded research. The team also includes an I-Corps Mentor who guides the team through the process of creating a business road map for commercialization of the technology.



Left to right: Peter J. Clark, Raymond Chang Lau and David Chu



Left to right: Kelly Mesa, Shekhar Bhansali and Alison Turner

Another FIU I-Corps awardee is Dr. Peter Clark, an associate professor in FIU's School of Computing and Information Sciences. The entrepreneurial lead on Dr. Clark's team is Mr. Raymond Chang Lau, who worked on the technology for two years while earning a master's degree from FIU in computer science. This team's I-Corps Mentor is Mr. David Chu, who possesses extensive experience in software product development and testing. The team's award-winning proposal involves identification of potential markets for introduction of an online tool to train software testers.

Grants awarded by the NSF's I-Corps program create unique opportunities for scientists to learn methods for evaluating the commercial impact of their NSF-funded basic research projects while honing skills as entrepreneurs. To be eligible to

The Division of Research, in collaboration with the FIU SCIS, will cohost an I-Corps information session on November 14th at 2pm - 3:30pm in ECS 243. The two I-Corps teams will be available to share with students and faculty their experience regarding the program.

For more information on the I-Corps Teams program please visit http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/i-corps/index.jsp or contact Peter Hernández (305) 348-3051 at the Office of Technology Management and Commercialization.

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