Energy Department Announces Regional Winners of University Clean Energy Business Competitions

May 4, 2012

Underscoring the Obama Administration's commitments to keep college affordable for American families and students and support the next generation of energy leaders, the U.S. Energy Department today announced the regional winners of its National Clean Energy Business Plan Competition. The initiative inspires university teams across the country to create new businesses and commercialize promising energy technologies developed at U.S. universities and the National Laboratories. Today's regional finalists—Northwestern University, University of Utah, University of Central Florida, MIT, Stanford University, and Columbia University—will go on to compete in the first national competition in Washington, D.C. this June.

"By promoting entrepreneurship at America's universities, the National Clean Energy Business Plan Competition is engaging the country's best and brightest students around the important energy challenges of the 21st century," said Energy Secretary Chu. "The winning teams have developed effective strategies for bringing innovative technologies into the market that will help keep America competitive in the global race for clean energy technologies."

The competition aims to promote entrepreneurship in clean energy technologies that will boost American competitiveness, bring cutting-edge clean energy solutions to the market, and strengthen our economic prosperity. Each team of students identified a promising clean energy technology from a university or national lab and created a business plan around the technology that detailed how they could help bring it to market. This includes financing, product design, scaling up production, and marketing.

Each of the six regional competitions across the country was run by a nonprofit or university, who worked with teams over the last three years. Each of the winning regional teams has already received $100,000 in prizes to continue plans to commercialize the products. The regional winners recognized today will compete in the inaugural National Competition on June 12 – 13 in Washington, D.C. At the national competition, regional finalists will compete for sponsor prizes and unique technical, design, and legal assistance. Organizations providing assistance include: the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), law firm Mintz Levin, the Clean Energy Alliance (CEA), Battelle Ventures, and The Cleantech Open.

The six winning finalists that will compete in the national competition are:

- **Eastern Midwest Region** (run by Clean Energy Trust, Chicago, Illinois)

  Northwestern University — NuMat Technologies: NuMat Technologies invented a nanomaterial that stores gases at lower pressure, reducing infrastructure costs and increasing design flexibility. One potential application for this innovation is in designing tanks to store natural gas more efficiently in motor vehicles.
- **Western Midwest Region** (run by University of Colorado Cleantech New Venture Challenge, Boulder, Colorado)

  University of Utah — Navillum Nanotechnologies: Navillum Nanotechnologies proposed expanding the commercial use of quantum dots. Quantum dots can emit a wider range of light using less energy than existing materials, and could be used in future generations of solar panels, televisions, cell phones, and related products.
- **Southeast Region** (run by University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland)

  University of Central Florida — Medsi Systems: Mesdi Systems developed precise manufacturing modules that increase production capacities and reduce costs of lithium ion batteries used in vehicles, consumer electronics, and medical devices.
- **Western Southwest Region** (run by Rice University Business Plan Competition, Houston, Texas)

  Massachusetts Institute of Technology — SolidEnergy: SolidEnergy's battery technology innovation, which improves the safety and energy density of rechargeable lithium batteries, is intended to accelerate the deployment of electric vehicles.
- **Western Region** (run by California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California)

  Stanford University — Stanford Nitrogen Group: Stanford Nitrogen Group developed a biological wastewater treatment process that removes and recovers energy from waste nitrogen and recovers phosphorus.
- **Northeast Region** (run by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

  Columbia University — Radiator Labs: Radiator Labs developed a low-cost, easily installed radiator retrofit that converts radiator heating systems into a highly controllable zoned system to significantly reduce the energy waste while increasing the heat distribution and consistency of building interiors.

These six regional winners will pitch their business plans before a panel of expert judges. The pitching, which is open to the public, is scheduled for Wednesday, June 13th in Washington, D.C. You can register to attend DOE's National Clean Energy Business Plan Pitches.

The National Clean Energy Business Plan Competition is part of the Obama Administration's Startup America initiative to celebrate, inspire, and accelerate high-growth entrepreneurship throughout the nation. More information is available on the National Clean Energy Business Plan Competition website.

DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy accelerates development and facilitates deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and market-based solutions that strengthen U.S. energy security, environmental quality, and economic vitality.