Students Learn Interdisciplinary Teamwork In Technology Innovation Challenge

“Finishing second in the Technology Innovation Challenge (TIC) was a positive thing,” We have a cutting-edge technology with broad product and market potential, insists graduating senior marketing student Patrick Shea ’07. Coordinated by the Isenberg School, the College of Engineering, and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the TIC is an annual business plan competition in which interdisciplinary student teams on the UMass Amherst campus vie for a first-prize award of $45,000 in seed money for the subsequent commercialization of the winning plan.

Patrick Shea’s second-place team, Surya, proposed to replace traditional solar cells with nanostructured solar counterparts that substitute flexible organic polymers for traditional silicon. Surya’s technology will offer applications in military use, disaster relief, and other low power devices (LEDs). It will also serve as a supplemental residential energy source.

“Our technology offers several advantages, including cost savings, material efficiency, and flexibility,” observes Shea, who teamed up with a postdoctoral research associate in chemistry and two Ph.D. students—one in polymer science and the other in chemistry. “My role was to take technical concepts and illustrate the market applications of the core technology in a way that readily speaks to firms and investors,” he emphasizes.

Ph.D. Student Receives National Award

In November, Tina Wakolbinger, a management science student in the Isenberg School’s Ph.D. program, was honored with the Judith Liebman Award at the INFORMS (Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences) national meeting. The Liebman Award recognizes outstanding student volunteers who have been “moving spirits” in their universities, student chapters, and the institute itself. Wakolbinger revitalized the UMass Amherst INFORMS chapter as its president in 2004-2005. In 2004-2006 she coordinated a highly successful interdisciplinary Operations Research/Management Science speaker series on campus.

Undergraduate Dean Carol Barr

Carol Barr’s first year as undergraduate dean saw record-high enrollments and admissions standards at the Isenberg School. Under Dean Barr’s leadership, the School achieved impressive rankings—1st in the Northeast among public universities and 58th overall nationally—in Business Week’s annual survey of undergraduate business programs. “My exceptional staff of Joan Spalding and Melvin Rodriguez helped us to support the best possible overall experience for our students—both inside and outside the classroom,” she emphasizes.

Dean Barr is Associate Professor and former Associate Department Head in the Department of Sport Management. She has Ph.D. and M.S. degrees in sport management from UMass Amherst and a B.S. degree in athletic administration from the University of Iowa. Dr. Barr’s research interests include gender equity and management issues in collegiate athletics. For several years, she was faculty coordinator of SoccerFest, a community-event management learning experience for sport management students.
The Munroe Family Scholarship was one among many new scholarships offered to Isenberg School students at the School’s annual awards banquet in May. Created by Bob Munroe ’82 and Erin Munroe, who met at the Isenberg School while both were majoring in marketing, the scholarship went to an Isenberg School freshman. In May Bob was promoted from president of Reebok USA to senior vice president and general manager of Reebok North America. In his new position, Bob is responsible for the geographic management of Reebok’s North American businesses. Bob joined the firm in September 1997 as Vice President of Field Sales for the North American operating group. A year later, he took on the added responsibility of overseeing sales operations. Reebok is a leading employer of Isenberg School and UMass Amherst graduates.