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LANL Puts Students to Work for New Mexico Businesses

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When Scott Laidlaw and Jennifer Harris created Ko's Journey, a game designed to teach math in middle schools, they weren't sure how to get it into the marketplace. With help from MBA students participating in a summer internship program at Los Alamos National Laboratory, they are now better prepared. The students helped them target interested schools and made recommendations to market their product on the Internet.

Academia to Main Street

Each summer, MBA students from top-ranked business schools work at LANL to help scientists, small businesses and entrepreneurs find commercial uses for new technology and assist companies with business challenges. MBA students spend 10 to 12 weeks on work such as evaluating market potential of a product, assessing competition and determining where to find customers.

The 2011 class consists of five people studying for their masters degree in business administration: Rachael Allen and Justin Dewey of the University of New Mexico, Nate Mason of Purdue University, Ian Foti-Landis of Keck Graduate Institute and Jason Wakizaka of the University of California, Los Angeles. Dewey and Foti-Landis are returning to the program for a second year.

Business owners interested in obtaining assistance this summer should apply by 5:00 pm May 20. Selection is competitive, and proposals are chosen by the students. While proposals affiliated with the laboratory are evaluated first, students often select small-business projects.

Never too small

In 2009, students selected Sportartist, a Chama-based sports memorabilia business. The interns developed an in-depth analysis of the market and offered suggestions for increasing sales from the company's Web site. Owner Jolene Jesse said the meetings were inspiring and gave her the confidence to try new ideas.

Interns also helped High Desert Discovery District (HD3), a startup non-profit organization headquartered in Santa Fe. HD3 strives to link new discoveries with experienced business professionals, enabling the development of high-growth businesses, jobs and wealth in New

Mexico. Students helped Michelle Hoeft, HD3's executive director, devise criteria for selecting companies it can assist and recommended procedures for working with the laboratories.

Real-world applications

LANL's MBA program is administered through the Technology Transfer Division, which serves as a conduit for LANL collaborations with private industry. The division promotes sharing LANL technologies and discoveries with entrepreneurs willing to find commercially feasible, tech-based products that can benefit society as a whole. It concentrates on technology licensing, cooperative research and development agreements and special assistance for employees interested in starting a business based on their LANL inventions.

For more information about the MBA program, contact Shandra Clow at clow@lanl.gov. For application guidelines, visit www.nnmconnect.net and click on the May 20 deadline under Events.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

