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Wanted: Promising technologies ripe for spinoff

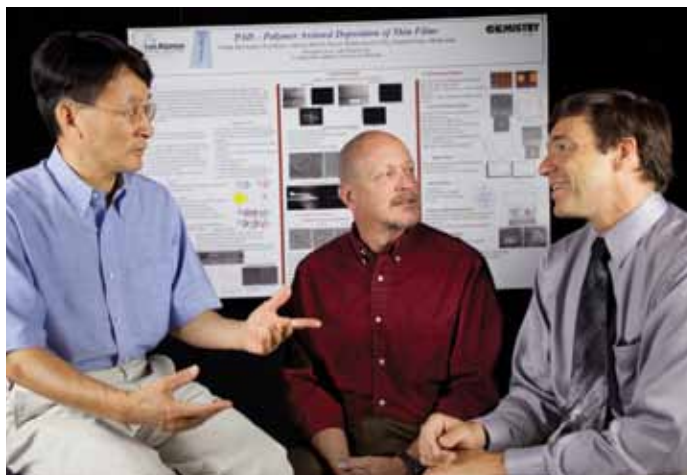
LabStart looks for diamonds in the rough

A self-described miner panning for technological gems, Russ Hopper begins each day inviting principal investigators and Lab managers to learn about LabStart – with hopes of uncovering their market-potential technologies.

LabStart is a joint undertaking between two venture capital firms, Verge Fund and ARCH Venture Partners, each with a long history of starting companies based on national laboratory and university inventions. It is part of the Los Alamos Venture Acceleration Initiative developed by the Technology Transfer Division.

Hopper, LabStart's entrepreneur in residence, envisions the joint venture's efforts as producing the seed of a vibrant entrepreneurial culture in Los Alamos. "I would love to see 10 or 20 startups come out of the Lab and provide employment for talented individuals in the area," he said.

With the goal of starting three companies in the next three years, Hopper has identified three promising technologies to date: polymer assisted deposition, with applications from microelectronics to solid state lighting; Lasonix, which grows crystals with a laser that make electronic devices for microelectronics and photovoltaics;



Researchers Quanxi Jia of the Superconductivity Technology Center (left) and Mark McCleskey (right) of Materials Chemistry discuss with Russ Hopper of LabStart (center) the prospect of taking polymer assisted deposition to market.

Sandra Valdez

and Reagentless Biosensor, which is a field-deployable waveguide spectrometer that may have agricultural applications.

"I think the Lab is poised for big things in the future," said Hopper, a molecular biologist with 20 years experience in business development, both in industry and at the Lab. "We have a lot of technology in acoustics, deposition technology, and instrumentation that will likely lead to a number of exciting inventions that can be the basis of startups and general commercialization."

Lab-developed technology, deployed with the help of LabStart, will benefit industrial competitiveness as well as the country's economic security, said

Technology Transfer Division Leader Steve Girrens. "Closer to home, this effort will help stimulate a more diversified, high-tech regional economy as directed in the Laboratory's prime contract," Girrens said.

Hopper stresses that LabStart helps researchers get their inventions into the marketplace. "We're not here to entice principal investigators to leave the Lab. Our modus operandi is to send Cooperative Research and Development Agreement or Work for Others funds back to a principal investigator's lab," said Hopper. "However, if they have an entrepreneurial bent, we can help them achieve their goals."

For more information, contact Hopper at brhopper@lanl.gov or 665-1578.

— Mig Owens

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