

Entrepreneurship news



Winners 2004. Left to right: Anthony Forster and Rob Dover (*Global Risk Management*), Toby Knowles and Andy Butterworth (*Warm Body*), Timothy Palmer and Malcolm Dalzell-Job (*Predictive Text Keyboard*). Centre (rear) Professor Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor, University of Bristol

re:searching for the next

James Dyson

Universities have come a long way in recent years. Not only are they now recognised for teaching and research, but there is also an increasing emphasis on enterprise as a value-added outcome from research. There are many ways to develop entrepreneurship, with success coming from a wide variety of approaches and activities. At the University of Bristol we focus on our key strength of world-class research first and foremost, while at the same time creating an environment to encourage academics to commercialise their research, often through the creation of new companies.

Finding new business ideas

The University's annual 'New Enterprise Competition' is one way of finding innovative new business ideas. Open to staff, students and recent graduates, it aims to inspire new high-growth businesses and to stimulate entrepreneurial talent. The winners are announced at the University's annual dinner to celebrate innovation and enterprise, which is attended by representatives from business, industry, government and academia.

2004 New Enterprise

Competition winners

Two teams shared this year's first prize. *Global Risk Management* from Dr Rob Dover and Professor Anthony Forster is an idea to provide information and coping strategies to organisations and individuals to help them operate in an increasingly uncertain, post 9/11, world. *Warm Body*, from Dr Andy Butterworth and Dr Toby Knowles, is based on the development of a tampon-sized thermometer to record changes in a woman's body temperature, to enable more accurate prediction of fertility times. They have recently been awarded £15,000 from the University's Enterprise Development Fund to undertake market research and progress their idea further.

A special undergraduate prize went to students Timothy Palmer and Malcolm Dalzell-Job for their *Predictive Text Keyboard*. They won £5,000 in cash and business support for their idea to use predictive text to dramatically increase typing speed.

Practice makes perfect

Runners-up from the 2003 New Enterprise Competition, Dr Ed Kingston and Professor David Smith,

have already put their idea into practice. Established in May 2004, their company VEQTER Ltd is now trading internationally, following their win of £6,000 in cash and £1,000 worth of legal advice. Ed describes how the University helped get VEQTER Ltd off to a flying start: "We were given mentors from companies to guide us through the process of developing a full business plan. They also gave us advice on how to turn our idea into a viable company and warned us about any black spots. It gave us a great head start."

Winner of winners

This year, for the first time, winners from the University of Bristol's competition were pitted against those from the Universities of Bath and the West of England (UWE) to decide which award-winning business plan most deserves the region's title 'Winner of Winners 2004'. The judging panel, including sponsors Business Incubation South West and Sulis Seedcorn Fund, awarded the £5,000 prize to UWE for a project called *LISTech* – innovative technology for forming metal structures. ■

The 2005 New Enterprise Competition was launched on 15 November. Open to staff, recent graduates and students from the University of Bristol.

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