

Foundation Focus

Secrets to Success

As the 2008 LES Foundation Graduate Student Business Plan Competition Gets Underway Eyes Are On Two-Time Winner UIC — What's Their Secret?

By Lydia Steck

As the 2008 LES Foundation Graduate Student Business Plan Competition gets underway, University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Professor Rod Shrader shared secrets to his program's success at turning out winning teams during a recent LES Chicago Chapter meeting.

In just under three years, Shrader has built a world-class entrepreneurship program within the UIC School of Business that other universities are looking to emulate.

After running a "low tech" business plan competition for a number of years, Shrader said he was inspired to start the UIC Technology Entrepreneurship Center after attending the Stanford Roundtable on Entrepreneurship Education. "It became clear that if we wanted to really be competitive we were going to have to ramp our game up," said Shrader.

Much to his surprise, the program was an immediate success. "I thought it would take five years of falling and scraping our knees before we had a clue," he said. "We were successful right away because we had phenomenal students who were able to compensate for the things we didn't know in the beginning."

The first team out of the gate (OrthoAccel Technologies, Inc., based on technology to speed orthodontic correction) has recently been acquired by a Texas company that is building a portfolio of medical device companies.

OrthoAccel is expected to bring its first product to market next year.

Subsequently, Shrader has seen a steady stream of successes, including Sanogene Therapeutics, Optimal Visions Corporation and Flow Diagnostics. To date, UIC student teams have won over 43 prizes in various business plan competitions along with hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money. They have prevailed over teams from Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern and Chicago.

Shrader will tell you that one of his secrets to success is simply that his program attracts students who are "the best of the best." He also credits a strong relationship between the UIC College of Business, the



From left: Jim Vlazny, Ada Nielsen, UIC Professor Rod Shrader, Chicago Chapter Chair Russ Garrison, and Catherine Vorwald.

Office of Technology Management (OTM) and the inventors of the technologies.

As a research I university, UIC does a tremendous amount of federally funded research. Technologies that end up in Shrader's program have usually been passed on by industry and other potential investors, but still hold significant promise in the eyes of the OTM.

"OTM has been fantastically generous in giving us amazing technologies," said Shrader. I went begging for scraps three years ago and since then they have repeatedly given us technologies that we could really sink our teeth into."

Shrader's three-course sequence begins with the basics of starting a technology venture – strategy, business plans, licensing in and out. In the second course, students then choose a technology and write a business plan. The finale is the UIC Concept2Venture Business Plan Competition where students receive outside guidance from judges on how to make their companies more real world.

Shrader offers a third course in the spring where students can move on and actually option the technology that they're working on and start talking to investors.

"Students revise their business plan 20 or 30 times based on the feedback they get from judges at competitions like the LES Competition. This feedback helps them to focus and refocus their plans until ultimately they know their stuff better than the judges. It's a great process to see unfold. It's quite a remarkable learning experience to watch take place," said Shrader.

So, will a UIC team make it to the winner's circle again this year?

If so, they will have to overcome some pretty stiff competition. For the first time,

the LES Foundation Business Plan Competition is accepting entries from across the globe. Five teams will compete in the final round of competition at the 2008 LES International Conference in Chicago, May 4-7.

Shrader will have two teams submitting plans for this year's competition. "These teams have already begun to gain momentum and have been named as semi-finalists in several regional competitions," said Shrader.

One of the UIC teams is being mentored by LES member and Mentorship Chair Jim Vlazny, who has judged and mentored other teams over the years. "I've been extremely impressed working with these student teams and I encourage LES members to get involved. Members can really contribute a lot to these students and have a very enjoyable time and learn something in the process. I think this Competition is a gem for LES."

This type of participation has also been key to the success of the UIC program. Shrader has firmly established a web of external partnerships in the business community that he uses to provide lectures and mentorship, as well as companies that provide teams with pro bono services. All of this interaction helps to keep the experience "real" for students.

"We are straddling the academic exercise and the real world. Before a student starts my class I try to disavow them of the notion that they are going to take a company to market. Rather, they're going to be able to lead a company forward for a couple of steps and then pass the baton to someone else who is better qualified to move the company forward. However, the skills they develop in that process are life changing," said Shrader. He is now looking to integrate his model across the UIC campus into other hotbeds of new technology like the schools of engineering and medicine.

Shrader ended his presentation to the Chicago LES members without mentioning what might be the most important success factor of all—the involvement of a dedicated and talented professor, but any UIC team will tell you that they've got that one nailed with Shrader.

LES Progress Report: CLP Test Development

The development of the Certified Licensing Professional (CLP) exam is right on target and will be awarded to its first set of applicants in July 2008. Here's a look at the multi-step development process, which is being driven by an external professional examination design and development organization.

November 2007—Identify Performance Domains. Volunteers met in San Francisco for the "role delineation" (job analysis) determination of the project. LES member volunteers who participated were selected to represent various industries, organization types and backgrounds. The role delineation meeting involved defining the major performance domains for licensing professionals underlying the licensing profession. Each domain was then broken down into its

knowledge base, primary responsibilities and associated tasks. The following were identified as major performance domains: Strategy, Intellectual Property Protection, Opportunity Assessment and Development, Valuation, Marketing, Agreement Development and Drafting, Negotiation and Agreement Management. These domains were confirmed through a sampling of a broad representation of the licensing community.

January 2008—Generate Test Component Elements. Volunteers met in Tampa for the "item writing" phase of the project. These volunteers, once again drawn from key areas of the LES membership, now acted as subject matter experts. Their role was to generate elements for test components while relying upon the already defined major performance domains and reflecting the specific responsibilities or tasks associated with each domain.

The CLP Board of Governors recognizes and thanks these dedicated volunteers: Phil Barnett, Pricewaterhouse Coopers; Mary Beth Cicero, MarketSense Ltd.; Paul Germeraad, Intellectual Assets, Inc.; John Jarosz, Analysis Group, Inc.; Michael Lee, Sterne Kessler Goldstein & Fox; Willy Manfroy, Bornival LLC; Lori Morrison, Northrop Grumman

Corp.; John Ramsay, Gowlings Lafleur Henderson LLP; Marcia Rorke, Mohawk Research Corporation; Peter Ross, University of Western Ontario; and Donna Shaw, University of California San Diego.

March 2008—Finalize Questions and Produce Study Guide. Phase III of the CLP examination development process involved finalizing the series of questions representing the weight and importance of each domain. Equally important was the development of a study guide, which includes representative questions to be used for examination preparation. The guide also includes a bibliography of resources that were relied upon for question development. This bibliography should also prove useful to candidates as they prepare for the CLP exam. The study guide will be available in early May.

Foundation News: UIC Team Updates

2006 Winner of the LES Foundation Competition:

Sanogene Therapeutics is a cancer treatment company based on a RNA interference technology. The technology showed tremendous promise in the lab with 100% cancer cure rate in animals with no side effects. Sanogene needs 10 years and \$50 to \$100 million to do the clinical trial work necessary to get to FDA approval and to market. Shrader calls this the most ambitious student project ever undertaken. The company continues to have traction and to move forward.

2007 Winner of the LES Foundation Competition:

Optimal Vision Corporation is based on a technology that uses infrared lasers to correct presbyopia. It is able to correct the inner layers of eye tissue without affecting the outer layers of tissue, which is quite remarkable. This company continues to gain momentum and to talk to investors and various corporate partners.

2007 Runner Up in the LES Foundation Competition:

Flow Diagnostics is built around an external medial devise that monitors blood flow. It creates a 3-dimensional image of blood that can then map on top of an MRI so that you can actually see blood moving through veins. It's great for diagnostics because you can see blood flow turbulence and other things that give doctors information that they can benefit from. This company is working to secure some federal research grants to move their company forward.



Volunteers meet in Tampa for test writing.

LES Education: We've Got Updates!

PDS Fundamentals:

Following a "summit" meeting on December 7, 2007 among a small group of respected faculty members, LES is proud to announce that the four components of the Fundamentals Course have been updated to form a more integrated whole. We thank Phil Barnett, Patrick Farley, Ada Nielsen, Brian O'Shaughnessy, Jim Vlazny, and Henry Wixon for their contributions to this effort.

PDS Intermediate:

In a separate but equally intense effort, each of the courses in the PDS Intermediate Course have undergone updates, the most "visible" of which is the integration of the former 201 (Legal) and 205 (Licensing) Courses into an integrated, day-long course, 201: IP Patenting, Due Diligence, and Licensing. This adjustment has allowed us to expand the 202: IA/IP Strategy Course from a half to a whole day and better integrate the content with the 203: Valuation Course and the now-final component, 204: Negotiation and Ethics. For their work on the most recent changes to the Intermediate Courses, we thank John Bone, Brad DeSandro, Alan Gordon, Ada Nielsen, Brian O'Shaughnessy, Mohan Rao, Marcia Rorke and Thom Tarnay.

PDS & CLP:

LES has a rich history of offering education programs to provide professional learning opportunities for our members. These programs have been developed over the years by respected professionals with broad knowledge of licensing and deep knowledge in their specialty areas. For licensing professionals interested in earning the Certified Licensing Professional (CLP) designation, we have learned through the role delineation component of the exam development process that the knowledge and skill domains represented on the CLP exam align closely with the content covered in Professional Development Series courses. This is no surprise to veterans of PDS programs, both students and faculty, as the topics covered in these courses were designed to provide participants with a comprehensive view of the licensing profession.