

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Sainsbury Laboratory scientists' dream wins national business competition Johns Hopkins team named top North American entry**

Five scientists from the Sainsbury Laboratory in Norwich, affiliated to the University of East Anglia, have been hailed as the best budding biotechnology entrepreneurs after winning a national business plan competition in London last night.

The team claimed the prize of £1,000 and the opportunity to attend a prestigious business plan competition at Rice University, Texas, USA, courtesy of the Department of Trade and Industry, next year. They beat off six other teams with their proposal of an imaginary new technology that would revolutionise the production of ethanol. The team, named Hi-Tef, had developed a system that increased efficiency and yield by combining the distillation and fermentation parts of the production process in one stage.

Biotechnology YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) has been running for nine successful years and is organised by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and University of Nottingham Institute for Enterprise and Innovation (UNIEI). It helps young scientists develop business awareness and an understanding of the skills needed to become a successful biotechnology entrepreneurs. The teams were selected for the final in regional heats and had to present a business plan for an imaginary biotech company to a panel of expert judges acting as venture capitalists.

Dr Peter Ringrose, Chairman of BBSRC, and head of the judging panel said, "The judges were hugely impressed with the quality of all the team's presentations and business plans but the Sainsbury Laboratory team showed a first-rate grasp of the product development, marketing, intellectual property rights and finance needed to make a biotechnology start-up company a success."

Jack Peart from the winning team said: "By attending Biotechnology YES we now realise how hard it is to set up a biotech company, however, by taking part we now feel we are in a position to make it happen."

For the first time, teams from North American universities were invited to participate in Biotechnology YES, and they competed in a parallel competition, sponsored by the British Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, at the Oxford and Edinburgh heats. A team from The Johns Hopkins University beat representatives from three other US and Canadian universities to secure the opportunity to return to the UK for the finals to present their concept of a cutting-edge instrument that would help GPs to diagnose illnesses through retinal scanning.

Runners-up in the main competition were InnUVate from Imperial College London who presented their idea of a cream that would trigger the tanning process in the skin but without the DNA damage caused by the sun's rays that can cause cancer to the judges. Other prizes presented included:

- Best intellectual property strategy, sponsored by Eric Potter Clarkson – DS Instruments, University College London
- Best plant science plan, sponsored by Syngenta – Pharma's Choice, University of Oxford
- Best healthcare prize, sponsored by GSK – Innovative Clinician Unlimited, Johns Hopkins University
- Best individual presentation, sponsored by Cybersense Biosystems James Taylor, Cambridge University
- The business plan most likely to have a global impact, sponsored by Senexis - Hi-Tef, The Sainsbury Laboratory

As part of their promotion of UK science in the United States and Canada the British Council sponsored a prize for the best female presenter, and this was awarded to Louise Biggs, Imperial College London.

One of the judges from intellectual property experts Eric Potter Clarkson, Dr Stephanie Pilkington, said, "Taking part in this competition helps young biotechnology entrepreneurs to gain the skills and awareness of how to convert academic knowledge into commercial opportunities. Although these ideas are all imaginary, the skills deployed by the young researchers will be of great benefit throughout the rest of their careers. The involvement of North American teams in this year's competition demonstrates the commitment of the science community to promote the quality of UK biotechnology abroad."

BIA Scotland representative and member of the judging panel, Barbara Blaney, said, "Over the years that Biotechnology YES has been running the quality of the teams has improved massively year on year and this points to a bright future for the UK biotechnology sector. Participants from previous years are now working in industry and have found their experience from the competition invaluable."

**ENDS**

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## **Notes to Editors**

- Pictures of the winners are available from the BBSRC Media Office, please see above for contact details.
- Profiles of the hypothetical 'companies':

### **ProTect – University of Strathclyde**

The team proposed a skin patch that would change colour to show the wearer how much harmful UV solar radiation they had been exposed to.

### **DS Instruments – University College London**

The team developed small sensor beads that could be dropped into reaction vessels, such as fermenters, to measure a variety of parameters as they moved around the

vessel. The beads would then use wireless radio frequency technology to communicate the results

**Hi-Tef – The Sainsbury Laboratory**

This team proposed a novel platform technology that would revolutionise the production of ethanol, a key fuel in several parts of the world. They had developed a system that increased efficiency and output by combining distillation and fermentation parts of the production process in one stage.

**HydroPro – University of Cambridge**

The team developed a process to produce important drugs cheaply and efficiently using algal cells.

**Pharma's Choice – University of Oxford**

Pharma's Choice proposed using a genetically modified version of the popular cattle feed alfalfa to deliver a new mastitis vaccine to cows that would save farmers money and increase milk quality.

**InnUVate – Imperial College London**

The team developed a new, safe form of tanning. They presented a plan for a cream that would trigger the tanning process in the skin but without the DNA damage caused by the sun's rays that can cause cancer.

**Genscent – University of Leeds**

Genscent proposed a new modelling technology that could be used to design and synthesise molecules to manipulate the sense of smell to allow the development of new insect repellents, odour-blockers and human pheromones.

- Genscent, University of Leeds, were winners of the Bioscience YES Yorkshire and Humber competition which is sponsored by the Regional Development Agency Yorkshire Forward. For more information go to: <http://www.bioscienceyes.co.uk/>.
- The ideas developed by the teams participating build on existing technology which is in the public domain or are based on hypothetical scenarios.
- For more information on Biotechnology YES go to: <http://www.biotechnologyyes.co.uk/>.
- The 2004 competition is sponsored by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the University of Nottingham Institute for Enterprise and Innovation, the Medical Research Council, the Natural Environment Research Council, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, Cancer Research UK, Syngenta, the British Council, GSK and endorsed by the BioIndustry Association (BIA). GSK have also sponsored a table for the winning team at the BIA gala dinner. The opportunity to attend the US Business Plan competition is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry.
- **ABOUT BBSRC**  
The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is the UK funding agency for research in the life sciences. Sponsored by Government, BBSRC annually invests around £300 million in a wide range of research that makes a significant contribution to the quality of life for UK citizens and supports a number of important industrial stakeholders including the agriculture, food, chemical, healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk>
- **ABOUT UNIEI**  
The University of Nottingham Institute for Enterprise and Innovation (UNIEI) is a world class centre committed to the development of entrepreneurial skills and the commercial innovation of new technologies and ideas. Our purpose is to engage staff and students in the acquisition of enterprise skills so that they are better able to realize the opportunities generated in a rapidly developing entrepreneurial culture. UNIEI aims to be at the forefront of international thinking and best practice in engaging universities and businesses in the process of wealth creation. <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/enterprise/>