

LIGHTING UP THE COMPETITION

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LEARNING IN 360°

THE INVENTION WON THE GRAND PRIZE OF \$25,000 AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH UNDER ARMOUR TO PRODUCE THE SHIRT FOR THE MARKET.

Although the money is vital, the judges' approval gave Light Bohrd something more.

"The biggest part of the deal was the validation around the concept and the opportunity for the technology," Forgey said.

He was one of several entrepreneurs who wrote a letter in support of establishing the LAUNCH program, which hosted its first workshop dedicated to Baylor-based inventors this year. "That's the kind of classic role of a university-based incubator – turning research into products," Leman said. "But we don't have a background of inventions, so we started with an external focus and now we are having an internal impact. We've attracted global attention."

Combine Baylor's emphasis on entrepreneurship with its ethical approach to capitalism, and there are no other players of Baylor's size who can fill the same role with credibility. "Put entrepreneurship and ethics together, and Baylor is at the top," Leman added. The LAUNCH program creates an access point for entrepreneurs by giving them "a much easier handle to grab," he said. "If you are an entrepreneur and have good ideas and don't have time to devote energy to them, there are ways to get help from Baylor in shaping and advancing those ideas, cost effectively."

After finalizing the designs for Under Armour, Forgey will continue developing ideas.

"We see tremendous applications in other areas, but a proposal needs to be 90 percent ready for the market when we put it out there. We are raising capital, so that we can pursue these projects with more vigor. That takes time and effort; a lot of times we don't know what we don't know until we test a product and find the weakness that we need to fix."

Light Bohrd's next bright idea? Embedding lights into safety apparel.

THE STORY OF **LIGHT BOHRD** BEGINS WITH A YOUNG SKATEBOARDER AND HIS ENGINEER FATHER WHO ENVISIONS PHOTOGRAPHING HIS SON ON A LIGHTED SKATEBOARD.

The end of the story is not yet written, but Chris Forgey, Light Bohrd's president, is developing the plot.

When Forgey, a mechanical engineer, first started a kitchen-table experiment to put lights on his son's skateboard, he did not imagine competing with thousands of other people for a \$25,000 prize. He merely wanted pictures of his son flying through the air with lights showing beneath his skateboard.

The next sentence of the story might say "Simple as that," but what appears to be simple often follows a winding path. The tale continues with Forgey's prototype: "It turned out better than we expected," he said. Crude, yes. But the lighted skateboard worked the way he wanted it to work. He continued to innovate, creating a skateboard boneyard.

With the help of an electrical engineering student, he tinkered more, producing a longer board with embedded LED lights, without the baggage of switches, wires or batteries. His focus shifted from artsy to more visibility, with lights on the back and front. This was a

nod to students and urban professionals who ride longboards to work.

"The boards had illuminated graphics originally, and they were on skateboards. We went to longboards because there was more real estate to work with. Longboards became the primary product we were trying to get to market," he said.

Success followed, but Forgey wanted to expand the opportunities. He began a relationship with Baylor University and its Technology Enterprise Initiative (TEI), chaired by Greg Leman. Leman now directs the two-year-old LAUNCH Innovative Business Accelerator at the Baylor Research and Innovation Collaborative (BRIC).

Forgey graduated from Texas Tech University. He was introduced to Baylor by friend Kevin Ludlum, who at the time was executive director of development at the Hankamer School of Business. The two had gotten to know each other at Texas Tech, where Ludlum earned a master's degree. "I knew there were some Texas Tech grads that were entrepreneurial and for whom faith

played a role in life," Ludlum said. Forgey, for example. Ludlum contacted him to become a member of the TEI board of directors. Forgey agreed and brought his project.

Leman's entrepreneurial programs bring together innovators and students. His work through BRIC, which is designed to commercialize research, shows students how to work effectively as consultants.

"The students bring nothing but their energy and dreams," Leman said. "You put them together with entrepreneurs and they create value." The program guides the students through a process that lets them shape their ideas to help move ventures forward.

BRIC is the biggest opportunity Baylor has to make an impact on research that lands in the marketplace, Leman added. One important part of the program is it challenges companies to think broadly about their innovations. "We want to see a path to a billion-dollar baby," Leman said.

When Forgey went to Baylor with his project, Leman put together a team of students from different backgrounds

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to evaluate the concept for market potential. The students helped Forgey flesh out his ideas for embedded-light technology, and Leman encouraged Forgey to think about different ways to apply embedded light to produce value.

"The process gives people like Chris a very efficient way to look at things from all angles, and a path to get them where they want to go in a speedy way. Chris did not succeed because of us, but we touched him," Leman said.

The Baylor professor provided tremendous leadership, Forgey said, and the result of his work was a lighted shirt for athletes. Although wearable technology already exists, Light Bohrd's shirt differs in that it has embedded lights, and the shirts are machine-washable.

In 2013, Forgey entered his creation in Under Armour's Future Show Innovation Challenge, an annual contest the fitness apparel company sponsors to find 'the next big thing' to develop. More than 4,000 entrants were pared to a dozen finalists, Light Bohrd among them. Forgey demonstrated how the shirt works at Under Armour's Baltimore headquarters by jogging in front of a panel of judges.