

Solar energy technology licensed

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Making solar energy cheaper and more efficient is the aim of a new licensing deal between the University of California, Davis, and Q1 NanoSystems. The university and the company, based in West Sacramento, Calif., have agreed on terms for exclusive licensing of a package of jointly-owned intellectual property stemming from inventions both on and off campus.

The agreement covers inventions that enable manufacture of very thin, very small wires, films and other structures with a precise chemical makeup. The work began with inventions by Pieter Stroeve, professor of chemical engineering and materials science; postdoctoral researcher Ruxandra Vidu; Saif Islam, assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering; and graduate student Jie-Ren Ku. These discoveries were further developed in the company's labs with input from university researchers.

"Q1 is another demonstration of the quality of entrepreneurship coming out of UC Davis, thanks to growing interest from faculty, and the multiple support programs available. We're delighted to have concluded this licensing agreement with Q1," said David McGee, executive director of UC Davis InnovationAccess.

"Our understanding of nanotechnology has allowed us to use old equipment in new ways, creating advantages in manufacturing and materials performance," said Q1 NanoSystems co-founder and COO John Argo. For example, outmoded photolithography equipment, formerly used for manufacturing computer chips, can be used to produce

nanoscale templates for novel structures.

The company has deep roots at UC Davis. Argo, who has an MBA from UC Davis, met some of the other co-founders at a mixer for students from the Graduate School of Management and the College of Engineering. They appeared to have a technology that was "looking for an application," Argo said.

"Q1 NanoSystems is a great example of combining the scientists' ideas with the business skills taught by our MBA program and coming up with a plan to turn those ideas into action in the marketplace," said Nicole Woolsey Biggart, dean of the Graduate School of Management at UC Davis.

John Argo and co-founders Brian Argo, Vidu and Stroeve, together with graduate student Ku, took part in the 2005 Big Bang! business plan competition organized by the management school. The team placed second.

The company has worked with both the technology-transfer and business-development units in UC Davis InnovationAccess to manage patents and licensing, and to network with potential investors and collaborators. The National Science Foundation has awarded multiple Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants to the company, with the university as a subcontractor on the grant. And the company makes use of the Northern California Nanotechnology Center, a nanoscale fabrication facility located in the UC Davis College of Engineering.

"We've really enjoyed working with the university," Argo said.

Source: University of California - Davis

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