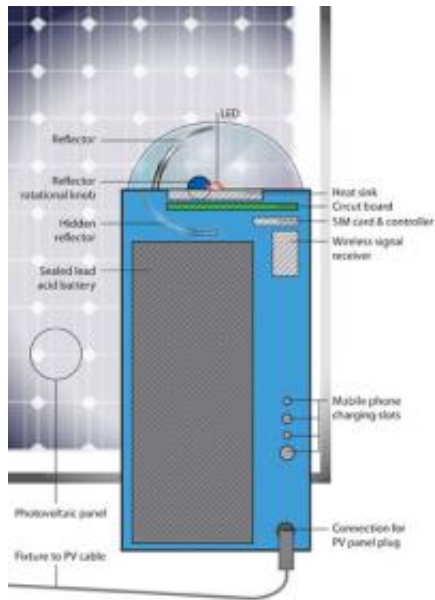


Providing light to individuals who do not have access to a power grid

June 22 2011



As part of the Change the World Challenge competition sponsored by the Office of Entrepreneurship each semester, Rensselaer students select a topic from a range of challenges with the potential to improve human life, and offer an innovative and sustainable solution to that challenge. Some examples of challenges include improving safety and security and addressing energy, water, or health issues.

Last year, a special \$5,000 “Best of the Best” award was created to

accelerate the progress of a fall or spring team that demonstrated a strong commitment and clear progress in pursuing its idea to commercialization.

This year's "Best of the Best" award was presented to Rensselaer graduate students Asiri Jayawardena '13 and Natalia Lesniak '11 for their innovative product and business model approach to providing [light](#) for people who have no access to a conventional [power grid](#).

Their entry, Quality Life Through Quality Light, included plans to build working prototypes of photovoltaic-charged [LED](#) lanterns and a mobile/wireless network that provides a "pay as you need" financing strategy.

"While all the student submissions had the potential to make a real difference in people's lives, the judges felt that Quality Life through Quality Light - all things considered - truly captured the spirit of the Change the World Challenge as envisioned by the Challenge's alumni benefactor, Sean O'Sullivan," said Rob Chernow, Rensselaer's vice provost for entrepreneurship.

Jayawardena and Lesniak are students in Rensselaer's Lighting Research Center (LRC), the world's leading university-based research and education organization devoted to lighting. The LRC offers the world's premier graduate education in lighting, including one- and two-year master's programs and a Ph.D. program. The LRC recently added entrepreneurship to its curriculum through a grant from the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA).

"The NCIIA grant allowed us to add entrepreneurial program elements to help students better identify and understand industry opportunities and the innovation process with a focus on lighting products and services that benefit society and the environment. The Quality Life through Quality

Light project is one of the results,” said Professor Russ Leslie, LRC associate director.

By means of NCIIA funding, LRC students have the opportunity to grow their innovations and ideas through business plan development and prototype construction. In addition, [students](#) have the opportunity to work with LRC multidisciplinary faculty and other business experts through the LRC Lighting Technology Greenhouse program, developed to foster the commercialization of sustainable lighting technologies and services.

Provided by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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