

FOCUS

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WILL YOU GET SPANX?

Tech helped a footless pantyhose founder turn personal savings into multi-million-dollar business. Page 14

THEATRE PRODUCES BIG BANG

Wannabe producers schmooze and bamboozle their way into staging the most expensive Broadway musical ever. Page 17



VentureLab bridges gap between research and commercialization

Technology business incubator celebrates fourth successful year of helping Tech faculty and students

By Zen Mehra
Contributing Writer

The pathway from laboratory innovation to the commercial market at Tech has been paved smoother by an ambitious venture called VentureLab, which celebrates its fourth birthday this week.

It offers a variety of services to faculty and students that help them commercialize their research.

"We at VentureLab look to marry the innovation and knowledge that lives inside a professor's head with

"You can now talk to investors in a language they understand."

Madhavan Swaminathan
ECE Professor

an experienced entrepreneur and some money," said Stephen Fleming, Chief Commercialization Officer of VentureLab.

"Nine times out of ten, the Professor is missing one or two important

things. One is a management team consisting of experienced entrepreneurs, and the other the initial funding needed to start the company," Fleming said.

Over the years, VentureLab has developed a wide network of investors and entrepreneurs who get involved in the start-up companies they help.

"The experienced entrepreneurs come from our network. Almost everybody here has done something like this before, so they know a lot of others, and the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon takes over," Fleming said.

Upcoming ventures are funded either through the Georgia Research Alliance (GRA) which grants money to small companies in their formative stages or through market institutions that provide seed funding.

"We are the channel through which a company can apply for that money," Fleming said.

"We know a lot of investors like venture capital investors, angel investors, high net-worth individuals and other private firms."

"Rather than going in cold, we prepare these companies and introduce them to such people."

"We help them put together a business plan that differentiates a

'product' from a 'company', which is what investors like to see."

Technological skills do not nec-

"We at VentureLab look to marry the innovation and knowledge inside a professor's head with an experienced entrepreneur and some money."

Stephen Fleming
Chief Commercialization Officer, VentureLab

essarily translate into managerial expertise.

"While there are exceptions, innovators often find that being a Chief Scientist or Chief Technology Officer is a better role as compared to being the CEO," Fleming said.

"The CEO often has to deal with issues like negotiating the lease of a building, ensure taxes are filed on time and that the company complies with equal opportunity guidelines.

If you're a brilliant researcher, that's not a very good use of your time."

VentureLab helps hire management or trained professionals to run day-to-day operations at these companies.

Dr. Madhavan Swaminathan, a Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), worked with VentureLab while floating his company, Jacket Micro Devices (JMD).

JMD specializes in radio-frequency passive components.

"The nice thing about Tech is that you have access to something like VentureLab. As faculty members, we are very good at developing technologies, and have some idea about the business side," Swaminathan said.

"But ultimately we need help to figure out how to present this technology to potential investors, and how to develop a business plan around it. That's where VentureLab comes in."

"Ultimately, one of the VentureLab Fellows became our CEO. It has been very useful to us."

"If you are in a university environment, most investors are not interested in talking to you since they either don't know much about your technology, or feel that most

faculty don't understand the business side of things."

"VentureLab helps bridge that gap. You can now talk to investors in a language they understand."

On the route to his second start-up, Swaminathan continues to be associated closely with VentureLab.

Orthonics, Inc., an Atlanta start-up company developing new biomaterials for spinal disc repair and regeneration is yet another VentureLab graduate.

"[VentureLab] made it possible for us to set up without having to raise money first just to pay the CEO."

Barbara Boyan
Professor, BME

Its technology is based on research from the laboratory of Dr. Barbara Boyan, the Price Gilbert, Jr. Chair in Tissue Engineering at the

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Recruiters arrive in droves to be impressed by students



By James Holder / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Thidarat Tosukhowong, a Ph.D. student (right) is interviewed by a BOC representative (left) at the Fall Career Fair held at Alexander Memorial Coliseum, which was attended by a wide variety of companies.

By Swathy Prithivi
Focus Editor

Career fair recently rolled into town and captured more than just student interest.

The recruiters, who attended this year's fair, held on September 13 and 14, 2005 at the Alexander Memorial Coliseum, were all eyes and ears on Tech students and their innumerable achievements and accolades.

"About the people that I'm interviewing here, I'm finding some real good talent. I'm pretty impressed

with some of the resumes, and [am hoping] that the folks that are in the company who are actually hiring will be able to interview them," said Javed Siddiqi, a senior software engineer at Lexmark.

Most recruiters seemed to be

"It was fun talking to the students here and trying to inspire the next generation of explorers."

Dr. John Day
Electrical Engineering Division, NASA

in line with that sentiment.

"Some of these students are so well qualified [that] they amaze me. Some of the experiences they've had have been just outstanding," said Claire Boland, Human Resources Lead at Monsanto.

"[Tech] has great students and I come here every year to take students. I hire mostly electrical engineers but

"[The students] were too well dressed. Come on, we're here in hats and shorts. They [need to] relax a little more!"

Kiran Achyutuni
Manager, Amazon

I also hire for the other engineering organizations. We've had good experiences here," said Dr. John H. Day, Chief of the Electrical Engineering Division at NASA.

Some recruiters seem to be filling more positions than they anticipated.

"It's been very interesting as we've had some very good students," said Joanne Berman, the Human Resources Manager for JDSU, a company providing systems and services in the fiber optic and telecommunications field.

"The funny thing is that we may found a few people for our European sites and we have some very good multicultural [applicants]. We've got an office in France that I may actually send some resumes to," Berman said.

"This is my first time recruiting at a career fair at Georgia Tech. I am so impressed with the qual-

ity of the students that I'm seeing, especially the underclassmen that are looking for internships," said Kimeth Williams, the director of Recruitment and Career Development at L'oreal.

"I thought I would wait and come and recruit interns in the spring but I've seeing so many great students that I plan on trying to get a schedule for October to recruit for internships," Williams said.

There were lighter moments to the serious, job-focused atmosphere.

"We get a lot of people who are interested in financial analyst positions and [when] they find out we're more of a sales, relational company, conversation quickly turns and they run away," said Dallas Nevins, a campus recruiter from Northwestern

"Some of these students are so well qualified [that] they amaze me. Some of the experiences they've had have just been outstanding."

Claire Boland
HR Lead, Monsanto

Mutual Financial Network.

"A lot of people kept losing their name tags and it wouldn't stick well to fabric but it would stick to other

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things,” said Mark Saxon a Research Associate at Battelle.

“So for one guy, it fell off and hit one of our [promotional] buttons and he was trying to peel it off while he was trying to talk to me.”

“You could tell he needed to focus on one thing or another,” Saxon said.

“The worst was when a guy came up to me and he just started talking

and didn’t stop for a couple of minutes about what he’s done and what he wants to do. It would [be ok] if it was an interview, but he came on awfully strong. So maybe some people are over zealous,” he said.

The recruiters were also surprised by the vast student turnout.

“I was amazed at the number of students that were here especially in two days. The companies are here one day and half the other,” Boland said.

“There are so many people look-

ing for students, which is really kind of neat. I haven’t seen so many blue suits in a long time.”

“There’s been a lot more activity than spring and foot traffic here. We’ve gotten a lot more qualified leads,” said Mary Stuart Iverson, a campus Recruiter at Northwestern Mutual Financial Network.

“[The students] were too well dressed. Come on, we’re here in hats and shorts. They [need to] relax a little more!” said Kiran Achyutuni, a Manager at Amazon.

The work put in by staff to make this event a success was well received.

“There’s a lot better food [this year],” Nevins said.

“I really love working with Career Services here and the committee did a fantastic job,” Williams said.

They were very accommodating, they looked out for all of our needs and so I’m very happy.”

“The staff has been phenomenal,” Berman said.

Overall recruiters found much

here at Tech to keep coming back year after year.

“I have two [Tech] students working for me and my experience with them has been so wonderful that I’ve been an advocate of hiring more [Tech] students because they bring in a lot of fresh ideas and talent to the actual business,” said Siddiqi.

“We’ve had [a] good experience here. It was fun talking to the students here and trying to inspire the next generation of explorers,” Day said.

Tech aids founder in shaping of new generation of pantyhose

By Melissa Cataldo
Senior Staff Writer

Sara Blakely was on BBC promoting her company and hosiery product, Spanx.

She was telling the news anchor, "It smoothes your fanny, lifts your fanny, tightens your fanny."

Well marketing can be funny sometimes, because in England, fanny means vagina, and the newscaster looked uncomfortable and said, "I think you mean bum."

This and other anecdotes kept Blakely's lecture at the College of Management last Wednesday surprisingly entertaining.

Blakely is the founder and owner of Spanx, a women's undergarment company.

Spanx's signature product is footless pantyhose worn as underwear.

"Tech was instrumental in me getting started... that's why I'm always willing to speak here."

Sara Blakely
Founder and Owner,
Spanx

Blakely was able to turn \$5,000 in savings into a \$20 million business.

"It gets rid of all panty lines and makes a woman look about five pounds lighter," Blakeley said.

One of the unique things about Spanx is that a woman can, unlike with normal pantyhose, wear them with any shoes, even sandals.

It's no secret lots of women will

"[Spanx] gets rid of all panty lines and makes a woman look about five pounds lighter."

Sara Blakely
Founder and Owner,
Spanx

pay lots of money to instantly have the appearance of slimmer, smoother thighs and, as the Spanx name implies, butts.

So despite the fact that some male executives laughed at Blakeley's invention, it flew off the shelves of major high-end department stores such as Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Due to creative marketing and humorous names and slogans, Spanx has been featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, CNN, *Forbes*, *Vogue*, and *The New York Times*, among others.

Blakeley was a contestant on Richard Branson's show *The Rebel Billionaire: The Quest for the Best*, winning first runner up and \$750,000 to start an international women's charity.

Blakely was working as a fax and copier salesperson by day and a comedian by night when she came

up with Spanx.

She was wearing white pants and needed an undergarment to wear underneath that wouldn't show, and a G-String just wasn't going to make it.

So she cut off the feet of some pantyhose and decided to turn the idea into a new product.

When she needed undergarments to go underneath white pants, she cut off the feet of some pantyhose and decided to turn the idea into a new product.

She went on the internet to look up hosiery mills and cold-called them.

When the hosiery mill owners laughed and dismissed her, she got in her car and drove around North Carolina to speak with them in person.

"All these men were making our undergarments, and that's probably why they've been so uncomfortable."

Blakely finally met Ted Hayes, a mill owner with daughters who loved the idea and so he agreed to help her take the project on.

It took a year to make the prototype with the right mix of stretch and support, no dig-in comfort waist, a cotton crotch, and an adjustable ankle band.

To patent her idea, Blakeley called three law firms in Atlanta. "They thought I was joking."

She said one lawyer even told her, "I thought your idea was so bad I thought you had

been sent by *Candid Camera*."

The law firms all quoted \$3000-\$5000 to write the patent, but that was nearly all of Blakeley's savings.

Instead she ended up writing most of the patent herself using a book she bought at Barnes and Noble, and she did in-depth research of other pantyhose patents using the Tech library.

She came to the Georgia Tech Library after work ten nights in a row to do research.

"Tech was instrumental in me getting started...that's why I'm always willing to speak here," she said.

"I developed the packaging with my friend on her computer," Blakely said.

She said she had a very clear idea of the design and wanted it to stand out.

"I had no focus groups...check in with yourself and don't doubt yourself...It's a sea of beige and gray, so I wanted red...very artsy and different."

There was no money for advertising, so the packaging had to make the product stand out on the shelf.

Confident in her finished product, Blakeley called Neiman Marcus, who put her in touch with their buyer in Texas.

She flew out and within five minutes the buyer ordered the product for seven stores.



In the question and answer session following her speech, Blakeley gave some insightful tips.

"If you have an idea, don't tell anyone [until you develop it]...the minute you put your idea out there, your ego is involved...People might say something and stop you before you start."

She pointed out that Ted Turner attributed his success to guts.

"I'm not the smartest person I know...I have no business back-

"If you have an idea, don't tell anyone [until you develop it]...the minute you put your idea out there, your ego is involved..."

Sara Blakely
Founder and Owner,
Spanx

ground...but I had guts."

A student asked about concerns over intellectual property, since a major drugstore brand could duplicate her idea.

Her reply was not to worry too much about idea stealing and focus on innovation.

"My biggest asset is the name Spanx, instead of fighting competitors, try to come up with the next big thing...People don't want to steal your idea until it's in the market doing well...try to be first to market."

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Coluter Department of Biomedical Engineering.

“VentureLab has been a partner in the development of Orthonics from the outset,” said Boyan.

“The CEO of Orthonics, Dr. Steve Kennedy, was a VentureLab Fellow. This made it possible for us to set up without having to raise money first just to pay the CEO. It also freed me up to do the science.”

“I’ve done it without a formal VentureLab and ATDC (Advanced Technology Development Center) and now I’ve done it with. It’s a whole lot better with.”

According to Boyan, attracting funding without such support is almost impossible and companies are best run and managed by professionals and not necessarily innovators. “VentureLab is a great way of gaining a foothold in the venture capital market and a good exposure to how things are done,” said Amit Bavisi, a Ph.D. student in Electrial

Engineering and an innovator in the making.

Start-ups give you something “beyond money,” he said and added that he would approach such an

“VentureLab is a great way of gaining a foothold in the venture capital market and a good exposure to how things are done.”

Amit Bavisi
Ph.D. student, ECE

organization should he ever decide to float a company.

“Tech owns a bit of equity in each of these companies. As they continue to grow, some may decide to go public or get acquired. That equity is then

worth a lot more than it originally was,” Fleming said.

Benefits are split between the professors, the Institute and others involved, but ultimately Tech as an ecosystem makes money,” he said.

Recent economic trends have hit many companies hard but VentureLab continues to flourish.

“The bust in the dot-com and telecom sectors served as a good wake-up call to many investors that not all companies are successful and not all investments make money.”

“While we output into that eco-system, our input is the innovation at Tech. If you look at the number of grants, their dollar value or the corporate partners we have had, that has been steadily rising upward,” he said.

“We have done pretty well in the last four years. We have about ten graduates that have raised about \$38 million between them. These companies are coming along. They are selling their products and hiring new people.”

“While I wouldn’t say that they

would not have emerged without VentureLab, I would like to think they are moving in the right direction faster and stronger because of us.”

“Our vision for the future is that

“There’s nothing as satisfying as building a company from the ground up, and I’d like to see other graduates become entrepreneurs.”

Stephen Fleming
Chief Commercialization Officer, VentureLab

every cell phone would have a JMD device in it. Things are looking good—the economy is improving, and JMD is trying to work with some very large companies in our area,

who would be using our devices,” Swaminathan said.

“There’s nothing as satisfying as building a company from the ground and I’d like to see other graduates become entrepreneurs. That being said, there is a lot to be learnt by working in a big company,” Fleming said.

“While there’s no one right answer for everybody, one should consider spending some time in a start-up for the experience.”

There are lots of different ways to make money but very few ways to be happy, and one of the ways to be happy is to have a job you love.”

“Being involved in a start-up is something that is very exciting. You influence a lot of decisions on a day to day basis,” Swaminathan said.

“Commercialization is the ultimate test for any technology I would encourage all students to come up with new ideas that would lead to commercialization.”

“There’s nothing like transferring everything you learn into a product.”

sliver

www.nique.net/sliver

Oh! You have monkeys and bananas in your under-pants!
I’ve corrupted lots of girls.
Lots of people have tried hun- what makes you think you are special?
You have a pope club?
How the hell do you have a pope club? Especially for a dead pope!
Who discusses policy on facebook?
So, my story about the pope.
Does it include the vagine or penis game?
Uh, oh. I’m going to hell.
Better start that facebook group.
It’s the urban version.
Who the fuck is Terrance?
That’s my new catchphrase.
I remember my first time getting mad at Kyle.
Everyone remembers their first time with Kyle. We were wathing the Pope thing.
The moments we’re talking just creep me out!
They were playing the penis game last night while we were waiting.
You can’t say vagine without smiling.
vagina not vagine you idiot!
and for that matter. vagina.
without smiling
Directions: bite,tear, and chew
Don’t choke
Creepy Andrew sucks. He sucks balls.
I’m pretty sure tha t there is a website out there about me telling me I’m gay.
I like shaved men.
Who the fuck is Terrance?
GTPD-I WILL enter until you get finished putting up the do not enter sign. Screw you.
At least the UNC fans are nice
Run The Ball!!!
i want to have Calvin’s babies.
you can’t show up 10 minutes into the game and tell people to get out of “your” seats.
Foosk Man Lad is my hero!

Tech Up Close

**CAN YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE ON CAMPUS
THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN?**

THIS WEEK'S PHOTO:

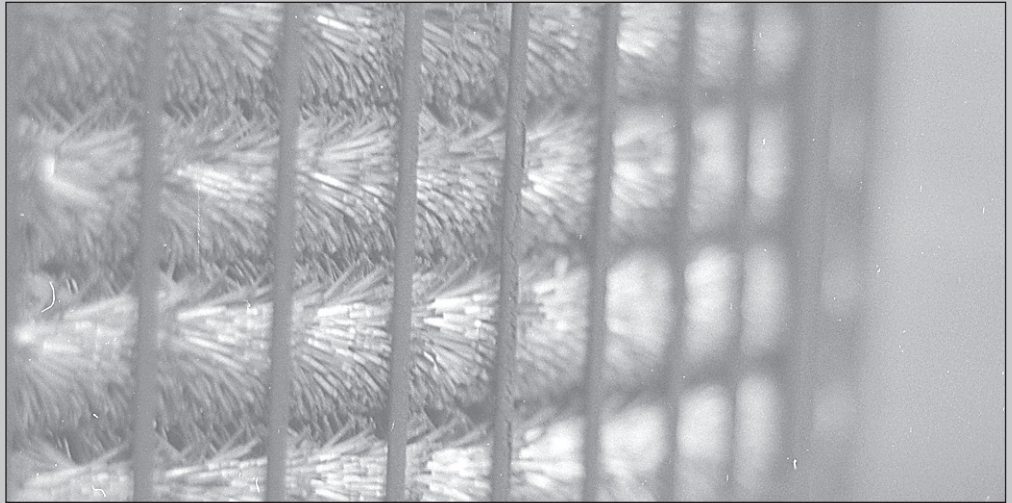
Email focus@technique.gatech.edu if you think you know the answer—and check to see if you won in next week's issue!

Answer to previous Tech Up Close:

Pole in front of Fulmer Residence Hall

Last week's winner:

Jesse Caldwell



By Ben Keyserling / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

sliver

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even security agrees
you wanna sit in "your" block,
show up the same time every-
one else does and quit being
drunk jackasses about it
we're all here for the same
team
coke and prunes taste like
dr. pepper!
Hurricane refugees need us!
Plz donate!
I wish I am MGT major. My
life would be so easy!
Why the hell isn't there a side-
walk on Tech Parkway!!
F*** the GTPD for shutting
down all the parties on cam-
pus this weekend!!!!
Maximum Gigundatude!
GENERICMAN STRIKES
AGAIN! MWAH HA HA
HA HA!
I'm in love...with PSpice. Why
couldn't they recommend this
in ECE 2040?
Those sunglasses were totally
not a gun. They were...sun-
glasses. Get glasses ASAP.
Advertising your organization
on skiles walkway doesn't
make me want to join
but rather see just how much
of it I can wash away with
my urine.
As long as you wear the rat
caps, people like myself will
steal them from you.
I can't believe they let me on
the field at half time.
Where does one sliver end
and the next begin?
Hey Sliver Girl, do guys hit
on you in their slivers?
Interactive newspaper... al-
most! Now I have something
to do at work!
Chess is boring in comparison
to Go.
Mind envisions polar,
Thoughts raging from left
to right, Without solutions
Have you every really thought
about what meat is? Next time
you take a big bloody bite
look at your own body. It's
just another piece of meat.
Hungry?
What if the Sliver Girl IS the
only person I want to read my
submission?

See page 20 for more Slivers

ESM Building dedicates room to deceased squirrels

By Trevor Stittleburg
Contributing Writer

A sign on one of the doors on the first floor of the Engineering Science and Mechanics (ESM) building proclaims it to be “The Squirrel Room.”

Is this a homage to the squirrel room of Willy Wonka and his infamous chocolate factory?

“Whenever we interview someone here, we have to tell the story of the squirrel,” said Meredith Ray,

“We think [the squirrel] came through an open vent on the roof, and then got stuck in the fan in the bathroom inside the room.”

Paddy Kenington

Assistant Director, Success Program

FASET director whose office is housed in the ESM building.

The incident occurred in the spring of 2001, when Paddy Kenington, assistant director of Success Programs, noticed one of the critters scampering down the hall.

“I saw a squirrel run through the



By Trevor Stittleburg /

Paddy Kenington, Assistant Director of Success Programs poses in front of “The Squirrel Room.” The room commemorates the unfortunate demise of several squirrels due to a lethal ventilator fan incident.

hallways. They kept the big windows at the end of the hallway open back then, and I think that’s where he came in,” Kenington said.

“I propped the door open and hoped he would take the hint.”

This was not the end of the squirrel episodes as the staff soon noticed a terrible stench emanating from one of the storage rooms.

At first, the staff didn’t realize that the source of the smell was actually

coming from the remains of an unlucky squirrel in the ventilator fan.

“We couldn’t figure out what the smell was. We think [the squirrel] came through an open vent on the roof, and then got stuck in the fan in the bathroom inside the room,” Kenington said.

“Of course, when you turn the ventilator fan on and there’s a squirrel in there....”

The squirrel had wandered into

the vents above the room and then fallen into the shaft with the fan.

“We turned the light on, which of course turns the fan on automatically, and, well,...end of squirrel,” Kenington said.

“We didn’t realize those little bits [in the fan] were fur. When the vent was taken out, we found the squirrel’s remains.”

Georgia Tech Facilities was called in to clean up the vent and

fan.

Unfortunately, it was not until after another squirrel suffered the same fate in the same fan that a grating was placed over the opening at the top of the building.

The first floor of the ESM building is also home to the offices of the Success Programs which includes FASET, GT 1000, and one-to-one tutoring.

“I don’t think they open the big windows on the end of the building anymore. Whether that’s more for

“Whenever we interview someone here, we have to tell the story of the squirrel.”

Meredith Ray

FASET director

security or squirrels I don’t know,” Kenington said.

Kenington decided to commemorate the room where the squirrels met their unfortunate demise by placing a sign designating the room as “The Squirrel Room” on the door.

The squirrels, despite having a room named in their honor, do not seem to find the grating very palatable, as the Success Programs staff has not experienced any more squirrel problems.