



# News

University News & Information

<a href="#">Admissions &amp; Aid</a>	<a href="#">Majors &amp; Colleges</a>	<a href="#">Research</a>	<a href="#">Alumni Community</a>	<a href="#">Campus Life</a>	<a href="#">Athletics</a>	<a href="#">About</a>	<a href="#">»</a>
--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 25, 2014

Contact: Amy Hewes  
805-756-6402; [ahewes@calpoly.edu](mailto:ahewes@calpoly.edu)

## Cal Poly Team Showcases Alternative Flame Retardant at Innovators Conference

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Two Cal Poly students showcased their idea for an alternative flame retardant at last month's National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) in Silicon Valley.

Roopak Mitra, an industrial engineering graduate student, and Arlin Krigel, a 2013 architecture graduate, presented an environmentally friendly, cost-effective alternative to the recently banned flame retardant HBCD. The Cal Poly team displayed its new product at Open Minds, an NCIIA event that showcased the work of 17 teams from some of the nation's top universities.

The product exceeds all current and proposed fire safety regulations — "it's even safe enough to eat," said Krigel.

"Flame retardants are found in almost everything we own, from couches to strollers, yet are extremely toxic and surprisingly ineffective at preventing fires," he said. "We have the chance to really improve the industry."

The product was developed through the students' company, MegaMatter, which specializes in sustainable materials for the construction industry.

"Our goal is to prove that sustainable materials can not only be cost-effective but also high-performing," said Mitra. "Knowing that products like our alternative flame retardant can make a big impact on the lives of people around the world is very exciting and rewarding."

Mitra and Krigel, who met through Cal Poly's Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE), credit the program for speeding their growth as entrepreneurs.

"We quickly learned that it's not just a virtual world, and we started making actual physical products," said Mitra.

Recalled Krigel: "When we entered CIE's HotHouse Summer Accelerator program, we were trying to create a new type of lightweight concrete. The concrete wasn't so great, as it turned out, but it happened to be fantastic at absorbing noise and was really fireproof. So we started making acoustic panels — then realized that fire was the real issue worth solving."

Open Minds is a proponent of keeping it real, noted Phil Weilerstein, NCIIA executive director.

"Too often, young technical innovators are stereotyped as 'people who do stuff with apps,'" he said. "Their flame retardant is a chemistry innovation. The impact can be more tangible and direct than even the most scalable social enterprise. At Open Minds, the more real it is, the better it fits with our objective."

"Roopak and Arlin are exemplars of what students can do, and they presented a

product of value,” he said. “Open Minds gave them the opportunity to show off what they’re doing in a high-visibility arena.”

The NCIIA’s annual conference on science and technology entrepreneurship in higher education brings together students, faculty members, business leaders and investors to share knowledge, lessons learned, and best practices to transform ideas into innovations with global impact.

Related links:

About NCIIA

<http://www.nciia.org/>

About MegaMatter

<http://megamatter.com/>

# # #

