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Five Student Startups Split \$45,000 in Innovation Quest Competition at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO — An interdisciplinary team of two Cal Poly students and an alumnus took first place for their invention of LiftGator, a removable, full-size hitch-mounted lift gate, in the 12th annual Innovation Quest (iQ) competition.

Justin Russo, a mechanical engineering student; Matt Kloss, business administration, and Marty Affentranger, a graduate of the mechanical engineering program, won the \$15,000 Carson Chen Innovation Award. The LiftGator is designed to attach to the rear of a pickup. One person can install it in under three minutes.

More than 170 applicants representing 55 teams from across campus competed for \$45,000 in this year's iQ. Eighteen finalists presented their ideas to a panel of judges; five teams won prizes and corporate-sponsored awards.

"We had so many deserving teams, it was really fun to see the students put the pressure back on the judging panel at the end of the day," said Thomas Katona, associate professor of innovation & entrepreneurship in Cal Poly's Biomedical Engineering Department. "We had a great spectrum of product ideas, including medical devices, Web and mobile apps, and food and water management technologies. Our polytechnic spirit was truly on display."

Additional prize winners were Chad Kihm, an industrial engineering student, Brian Pocock, agribusiness, Becker McGuire, business administration, and team members Matt Ortiz and Luke Bland, who won the \$10,000 Rich and Jackie Boberg Innovation Award for their product, App Scrolls. The creators said App Scrolls has the potential to become the largest online community to connect, educate and entertain mobile gamers.

Eric Adler and Garrett Hall, both mechanical engineering students, and Jeffrey Hufford, an electrical engineering student, took third place and \$5,000 for SENCE, a wireless smart water meter that provides homeowners with real-time water usage information via a phone app.

Tanner Cook, mechanical engineering major, Wyatt Nelson, aerospace engineering, David Juarez, business administration, Morgan Gramling, environmental management & protection, and USC student Adam Gramling won the \$10,000 Parsons Innovation Award for Higea Technologies for creating a material that enables extraction and recovery of petroleum from spill zones.

Stanley Laszczyk and Harvir Humpal, biomedical engineering students; Jessica Krtok, business administration, Patrick Noble, computer engineering, and James Fazio, computer science, won the \$5,000 Quality of Life Plus (QL+) Award for U-Turner, an ergonomic body sling designed to help nurses more easily turn patients on their side for treatment.

These teams will be invited to interview for the SLO HotHouse Summer Accelerator program, a Cal Poly CIE venture. Accepted teams receive \$10,000 to help fund their startup, mentorship, workspace and business guidance. The LiftGator team is already

part of the HotHouse program, so the team that took sixth-place in the iQ competition will be invited to interview as well.

Innovation Quest, held in cooperation with the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE), is designed to encourage innovators to pursue their ideas and help with the funding needed to launch their business.

Cal Poly graduates and business leaders founded iQ as a nonprofit philanthropic corporation to promote innovation and give back to the community. Since its inception, iQ has awarded more than \$300,000. Thirteen of 24 award winners are still in business, including local companies such as InPress Technologies, RepairTech and iFixit.

For more information about iQ and the winners, go to: www.innovationquest.org.

About the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
The Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship manages and supports a wide variety of programs and activities to stimulate the entrepreneurial Learn by Doing spirit at Cal Poly and to assist entrepreneurs in following their dreams. For more information, go to cie.calpoly.edu.

Captions:

From left, LiftGator's Marty Affentranger, Matt Kloss and Justin Russo won the \$15,000 Carson Chen Innovation Award. The LiftGator is designed to attach to the rear of a pickup in under three minutes.
From left, Higea Technologies' Tanner Cook, Morgan Gramling, Wyatt Nelson and David Juarez won the \$10,000 Parsons Innovation Award for creating a material that enables extraction and recovery of petroleum from spill zones.

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