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Ten Entrepreneurs Chosen for Tech Park U Class

BATON ROUGE – Ten of Baton Rouge’s budding technology-oriented entrepreneurs have been chosen to be in the first class of Tech Park U, a program created by the Louisiana Technology Park in association with the Baton Rouge Business Report.

Tech Park U is a new, nine-month boot camp for entrepreneurs looking to take their idea or emerging business to the next level of implementation.

“We learned about Tech Park U at the perfect time -- just when we began working on our business plan. Choosing to participate was a no brainer. Easy access to the business acumen of the Tech Park staff will be invaluable. We are thrilled to take part in the program,” said Yohannes Desta.

Desta will be tapping his six years experience working at LSU’s CAMD in developing his new business in Tech Park U.

“Tech Park U seemed like a great stepping stone for me. I know my software, but I wouldn’t say that I know the software industry as well as I need to. I want Tech Park U to teach me how to run a software company. There’s a national market for this, but I have no clue at this point how to accomplish this,” said Tom Shaw who is developing a software product for college and university Greek rush systems.

“This is exciting. I think we’ll all pick up new things just being around each other. There certainly will be a synergy here that would not exist if I were isolated in an office by myself,” Shaw said.

From January to March Tech Park U members will write and develop their business plan using FastTrac[®] New Venture[™] Curriculum, designed by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. FastTrac[®] accelerates entrepreneurship through practical, hands-on business development training. The members will have full access to Louisiana Technology Park office resources, including their own cubicles with phones (including long distance services, voice mail and call forwarding), high-speed Internet access, email, secretarial support, free use of fax, printers and copy machines, office and meeting space, and 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, secured office access.

Tech Park U members will also have access to SCORE counselors, regional business people, local speakers and the nationally acclaimed J.J. Hill Reference Resource Library will be available for support. The class will meet every Wednesday night for three hours.

“The truly unique aspect of Tech Park U is the implementation stage which after they have developed and honed their business plans, provides them with the all of the resources to get their company up and running. With a solid business plan that they already developed earlier in the program, and then the implementation step, we expect that many of these companies will grow and have a positive influence on Baton Rouge’s economy,” said Louisiana Technology President Eddie Ashworth

The 10 members of the program are:

Yohannes Desta who is working in the field of nanotechnology; Tom Shaw has developed a software program to help sororities during the Rush process; Ray and Katherine Castle work in the area of online continuing medical education courses; Christopher Johnston is working on push advertising technology for cell phones; Dan Cadigan is working with radio frequencies for the construction industry; Salena Accardo is working on case management/litigation software; Layne Barnum and Rob Mire will be working on an online training portal; Porcha Cooper is working in the field of office technology; Carol Wright is working to advance an online product; and Wendy Williams will be developing an online community for new mothers.

Applicants submitted an online application which asked several questions including the vision for the company. The applicants were then judged using a 40 point scale. The top 10 applications were admitted. The judges for Tech Park U were Meg Mahoney, Baton Rouge Area Chamber; Genevieve D. Silverman, Dean Capital; JR Ball, Baton Rouge Business Report/225 Magazine; and Drew Burdsall, Espion International.

The program will conclude in September with a business plan competition where the winning business plan will receive a \$2,000 grant.

Additional information about the program can be found at www.TechParkU.com.

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