

Mobile Foam's Innovative Product Finds Success Beyond WSU

By Andrea Baseler-Verner

Boeing Scholars Program

The Boeing Scholars Program is a two-year program that provides outstanding junior and senior students a multidisciplinary educational experience that prepares them for a globally competitive workplace. In their senior year, 12 scholars work in teams on Boeing-assigned projects in a unique multidisciplinary class and compete in the WSU Business Plan Competition. Past projects have yielded patentable solutions or solutions that have been implemented by Boeing.

Students from the Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture, the Carson College of Business, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication collaboratively execute projects identified and sponsored by Boeing.

Award Amounts

\$2,000 scholarship, junior year

\$3,300 scholarship, senior year

Eligibility/Requirements for Business Students:

- Apply to certify in the Carson College of Business
- Have a minimum 3.0 GPA

Scholarship Recipients Must:

- Apply for a Boeing paid summer internship.
- Accept and participate in internship if offered.
- Register for Entrepreneurship 496 (senior year-long multidisciplinary course).
- Submit project in formal presentation to Boeing management at Boeing facility.

More than 1.6 billion people live in substandard housing worldwide. Over 100 million of these people are homeless, with the majority living in developing countries. While thousands of organizations worldwide make it their mission to provide housing for this population, only Mobile Foam, a startup company comprised of WSU entrepreneurial students, delivers a means of providing cost effective, insulated housing through a turn-key building kit.

Mobile Foam's product enables houses to be built using the Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) construction technique. The goal of the project is to provide all of the necessary materials and consulting to produce a more energy efficient, cost effective home for the end user.

"Our idea sprang from seeing the staggering statistics of homelessness in developing countries, and having a deep-seated passion for helping the needy," said Chris Routen, Mobile Foam's chief executive officer and a mechanical engineering student. "Our product will help thousands of organizations worldwide reduce the cost of shipping

necessary resources and building materials for construction of homes, especially in impoverished areas."

Routen and team members Bettina Ernst (civil engineering), Austin Carter (business marketing/entrepreneurship), Kelsi Lakey (computer engineering), and Dane Baird (mechanical engineering) placed second in this year's Business Plan Competition. Mobile Foam also won the Inland Northwest Business Plan Competition in April and the Best Sustainable Business Idea at the University of Washington Foster School of Business Competition in May.

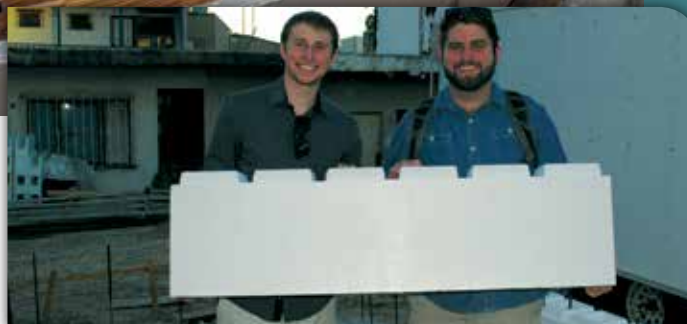
The team formed in 2013 after they became acquainted through the Harold





Mobile Foam team members working over spring break on a job site in Tijuana, Mexico.

Dane Baird (left) and Austin Carter holding building blocks made from the ICF construction technique.



Frank Scholars Program and discovered a shared passion for entrepreneurship. They decided to take Entrepreneurship 496 to compete in the 2014 WSU Business Plan Competition and use their combined strengths to develop a project that would serve people internationally.

While on a service project the previous summer, Carter, Mobile Foam's chief marketing officer, met with a man who built and developed a school in Uganda. He informed Carter about the ICF building product that can be inexpensively shipped and produced on-site. When Carter shared the information with his teammates, they determined to develop an innovative building kit that would allow any organization, including schools, churches, and community centers, to build in their location of choice with no construction experience necessary.

Through Mobile Foam's research, two members of the team were presented with the opportunity to travel to Tijuana, Mexico, to test the building method with partners Lazarian World Homes and Extreme Nazarene Ministries, who both verbally expressed interest in the product. Here, the students had first-hand experience using the product to build a church.

"It was amazing to see how the ICF product actually worked and to see how our efforts positively affected citizens in the community," said Carter. "It's rewarding to make a difference and see this come to fruition with partners that are interested in the product."

board members, and were provided with international travel opportunities to help implement the product. Currently, the Mobile Foam team is in the investment phase of their business plan and is seeking outside funding. The team is also one of 10 student-led startups accepted into the 2014 Jones and Foster Accelerator, a program that helps student startups transition from idea to reality and earn up to \$25,000 in follow-up funding.

To learn more about Mobile Foam or to invest in the business, contact Mobile Foam's CFO, Dane Baird, at dane.baird3@gmail.com.

Harold Frank Scholars Program

The Harold Frank Engineering Entrepreneurship Institute is comprised of junior-level engineering, communication, and business students interested in technological entrepreneurship. The program gives students the tools and experiences they need to pursue their ideas. The three-semester program includes a three-week summer program in San Francisco and a trip to Silicon Valley, a 12-week internship, entrepreneurial courses and activities, and a technology ventures course. Harold Frank ('48 B.S. Electrical Engineering) established the Harold Frank Scholars Program in the Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture in 2004 with a \$3 million gift.

Summer program

On the Pullman campus, students spend a week learning a variety of skills that provide them with a firm foundation in entrepreneurship. Focus areas include:

- Team building exercises
- Business etiquette
- Technology transfer and intellectual property issues
- Government support for new companies
- Meeting founders, CEOs, and patent attorneys
- Oral communication boot camp

Following the initial week in Pullman, students visited Silicon Valley, one of the world's largest innovation and product development centers, to experience:

- Informal interactions with entrepreneurs
- Networking opportunities
- Bank, angel, and venture capital funding
- Founder, CEO, and corporate attorney interviews
- Company operations from the inside
- Marketing seminars
- Visits to companies such as Google, HP, Plasticlogic, and Bloomreach

Learn
more at
business.wsu.edu.