

# Going Private

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## Program Continues to Support Energy Entrepreneurship

Green Launching Pad project leader Venky Venkatachalam: "Sponsors seem very impressed."

A UNH business accelerator called the Green Launching Pad (GLP) has proven over its first two years that it's possible to foster sound stewardship of the environment and boost the state's economy by successfully launching 14 "green" businesses—in renewable energy, green manufacturing and energy efficiency.

As it enters its third year, the GLP will continue to support energy entrepreneurship and offer valuable internships to students while transitioning from a public grant-funded enterprise to a privately funded one.

Private sponsors have already looked at GLP's track record and have stepped up to keep the project's momentum going," said project leader Venky Venkatachalam, professor and associate dean of academic programs in the Whittemore School of Business and Economics.

"They were very impressed," Venkatachalam said of the sponsors, to be named at a later date. "They care for the state, they care for the region, they care for the students, and they want to keep supporting us."

Venkatachalam, who was recently honored with the 2012 UNH Alumni Association Award for Excellence in Public Service, was a key player of the GLP's leadership team when the accelerator started in 2010. It was initially the result of a meeting between former business management professor Ross Gittell's entrepreneurship class and natural resources professor George Hurtt's environmental science class. From there it grew into a partnership between UNH and the N.H. Office of Energy and Planning, with funding from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Venkatachalam said the goal for GLP moving forward is to operate as a public/private hybrid for the next two years, then to stand on its own with private sponsorships by 2015.



**THE GREEN LAUNCHING PAD IS A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVE THAT ENABLES LOCAL START-UPS TO BRING GREEN SOLUTIONS TO MARKET.**

Private sponsors will ensure the continuation of a project that provides mentoring and funding to the best and brightest entrepreneurs who are ready to bring their green ideas to market. Venkatachalam calls the project an "innovation ecosystem" that connects UNH students and faculty from across disciplines, private industry mentors and government agencies to start-ups to provide them with a strong support network in which to grow.

One of the first companies to successfully compete for the GLP was Revolution Energy, a Portsmouth-based company that provides holistic energy planning and turnkey systems to municipalities, non-profits and businesses interested in affordable sustainability. The GLP has helped it to double the number of projects it takes on each year.

"We like to think of ourselves as one of GLP's success stories," said co-founder Michael Behrmann. "The GLP provided the platform for Revolution's growth, contributed to our overall business sense in order to sustain the growth, provided necessary and timely resources that allowed us to expand, and have also provided continuous support to

make sure we are successful now and into the future, creating jobs in New Hampshire and the region.”

Another GLP success story is Therma-HEXX, also based in Portsmouth. Founder Robert Barmore invented energy efficiency products called ThermaPAVER and ThermaCEILING. ThermaPAVER is a heat exchanger that allows for absorption of solar heat from hot paved surfaces that can then be used to heat water or melt snow. ThermaCEILING uses radiant heating and cooling technology for energy efficient indoor systems.

The GLP allowed Barmore to turn his ideas into a warehouse full of materials ready to be sold. “They enabled us to order the raw materials, pay our rent and to order and build our manufacturing equipment,” he said. “They allowed us to start. We couldn’t have done it without them.”

The mission of the GLP is closely aligned with those of the new Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics, Venkatachalam said. “My mantra has become ‘The five E’s: Energy, Economy, Environment, Entrepreneurship and Education,” he said. “That’s what we’re all about.”

For students, the E for Education means that they’ll continue to get opportunities for real world experiences as interns who are part of solving important issues of energy sustainability and economic development. It’s exactly what education should look like in the 21st century, Venkatachalam said.

“If we can show them how to have an entrepreneurial mindset, how to achieve as an entrepreneur, by creating products and services they are very passionate about and can be successful doing, that’s the best thing you could ask for,” he said.

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