

For immediate release

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High-res jpegs are available by request via email

**UAA’s Rhizoform named one of best university startups of 2016**

UAA’s Rhizoform LLC has been named one of the best university startups of 2016 by the National Council of Entrepreneurial Tech Transfer, an association of university startup officers. Only 36 companies from among the 200 that entered were selected to showcase their startup at the council’s first [University Startups Demo Day](http://ncet2.org/2016-demo-day.html) in Washington, D.C.

Rhizoform was co-founded by UAA [public health](https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/health-sciences/mph/index.cshtml) professor [Philippe Amstislavski](http://greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu/blog/40105/growing-insulation-from-nature/?a) and UAA [civil engineering](https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-engineering/departments/civil-engineering/index.cshtml) professor [Joey Yang](http://greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu/blog/40105/growing-insulation-from-nature/?a). The team is developing a biotechnology to produce thermally insulating foams that are both renewable and biodegradable. The startup aims to fully develop this technology and bring the product to market for use in the building industry, which is seeking a sustainable, cost-competitive technology for thermal insulation.

“Biomaterials have many occupational health and environmental advantages. Unlike plastics, biomaterials don’t require a lot of energy to produce and don’t become waste that ends up in our waters,” said Amstislavski. “We want biomaterial technologies to mature and succeed by becoming cost competitive. This is the key reason we created Rhizoform, and it is exciting to see that it is getting national attention.”

Together, Amstislavski and Yang have developed a prototype for carbon-neutral and high-value insulation from forestry byproducts and mycelium that has piqued the interest of investors and venture capitalists.

(MORE)

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Seed money from a $25,000 [UAA Innovate grant](https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/research/office-of-research-and-graduate-studies/opportunities-and-events/innovate-awards/) in 2015 helped fund the research. Innovate grants are designed to inspire research and entrepreneurship resulting in additional funding or intellectual property.

The University Startups Demo Day will showcase the work of universities across the nation and the important role academic research plays in driving discoveries that foster economic growth and competitiveness.

Visit the links below for more information on the following:

Amstislavski and Yang’s research – http://greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu/blog/40105/growing-insulation-from-nature/?a

University Startups Demo Day – http://ncet2.org/2016-demo-day.html

UAA Innovate Awards – https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/research/office-of-research-and-graduate-studies/opportunities-and-events/innovate-awards/

UAA Civil Engineering Department - https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-engineering/departments/civil-engineering/index.cshtml

UAA Master of Public Health – https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/health-sciences/mph/index.cshtml

Photo: Philippe Amstislavski in a UAA lab with samples of the “biofoam” insulation he and his team have grown from mycelium. (Photo by Philip Hall / University of Alaska Anchorage)

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