

NSE grad student wins Heller Entrepreneurship Grant

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Nuclear Science and Engineering (NSE) graduate student Sam Shaner was one of four students recently awarded the Ronald I. Heller Entrepreneurship Grant by MIT through the Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship. The grant is presented annually to an MIT student or group of students for their significant impact on the quality and overall spirit of entrepreneurship at the Institute.

Shaner is an NSE PhD student and a DOE NEUP Fellow. He currently serves as co-managing director of the MIT Clean Energy Prize (CEP) and is a director of the Harvard Cooperative Society, and was a co-director of the Nuclear Energy Innovation Summit at the 2013 ANS Student Conference. Last year Shaner was a semi-finalist in the 2012 MIT Clean Energy Prize with a startup developing a novel artificial photosynthesis technology to directly convert sunlight, CO₂ and water to liquid hydrocarbon fuels.

As co-managing director of the 2013 MIT Clean Energy Prize, Shaner helped strengthen the interaction between budding student entrepreneurs and industry experts by organizing VC/energy entrepreneur meet-ups. He also expanded the prize purse from \$270,000 to \$320,000 by recruiting additional sponsors, doubled the number of competition applicants and opened the competition to a wider array of clean energy technologies.

Before coming to MIT Shaner received a BS in Chemical Engineering from UCSB (graduating first in the College of Engineering class of 2011) where he performed research on the design, synthesis and testing of nano-structured inorganic materials for hydrocarbon catalysis in collaboration with industrial partners including Corning Inc. and Gas Reaction Technologies Inc.

The other three Heller winners in 2013 are undergraduates Heidi Baumgartner (Physics) and Nikita Khlystov (chemical engineering with a minor in materials science and engineering) and MBA student Anya Priester.

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