



From *Vision to Venture*

FEMBA Team Wins UC Irvine's Premier Business Plan Competition

In May 2008, a Merage FEMBA student team won 1st place in the prestigious Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth Business Plan Competition, a cornerstone of The Paul Merage School of Business' Don Beall Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The competition is held annually at UC Irvine and garners international media attention with cash prizes of up to \$30,000 awarded to the winners. This year's first-place winners were the FEMBA Presto Wireless Team, whose prize was \$15,000.

Although the competition is open to all UC Irvine students, FEMBA students have a unique advantage because of their prior business experience and their participation in the Merage program. "As an electrical engineer, I didn't have a formal business education prior to the program. The School does an excellent job in training people who have little or no formal business background." says Matt Knebl, Presto Wireless Team Leader and CFO/COO/Engineering Consultant, Waterdog Engineering Inc. Anil Sharma, Team Presto Wireless and Senior Program Manager, Thales Avionics, adds, "This competition is another great example of taking what we learn in the classroom, as well as our collective experience, into a real-world application. Successful start-up concepts must be able to effectively utilize both."

Presto Wireless bested 19 other competing teams with their innovative idea to revolutionize the wireless world. "I had the idea about a year and half ago," says Knebl. "I wanted to develop a technology that would dramatically improve the speed of wireless data. The problem for wireless users today is that they are limited to the speed and coverage of a single wireless network. With our technology, everyone will be able to access all available wireless networks simultaneously – thereby creating much faster and more reliable wireless service. This means download times will be much shorter and customers will experience fewer dropped data connections on trains or in taxis."



Left to right: Prof. Kaye Schoonhoven, UCI; Craig Jack, Coach; Aric Plumley, Presto; Mark Skaist, Straddling Yocca Carlson and Rauth; Vishal Kanodia, Presto; Matt Knebl, Presto; Anil Sharma, Presto; Shankara Raghuraman, Presto; Andrew Monteabaro, Presto; Dean Policano, UCI; Charlie Baecker, UCI