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## Inside Oregon

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# UO's Solar Awning project advances to semifinals in national competition

A University of Oregon architecture program team has advanced to the semifinals of the Cleantech Open 2011 business competition, winning them free intensive business and investment coaching and a \$10,000 software package. The UO team also remains in the running for a \$250,000 national grand prize.

Innovative Invironments, a Eugene start-up company with collaborations from UO Architecture and UO Business School graduates, plans to commercialize the Solar Awning – developed by professor Ihab Elzeyadi, director of the UO High Performance Environments Lab (HiPE) – as a SolarStream™ 3-in-1 green building product. The UO entry was in the Green Building category.

The mission of the Cleantech Open is to find, fund and foster “the big ideas” that address today’s most urgent energy, environmental and economic challenges.

Entrants compete regionally for two \$10,000 and three \$20,000 prizes. The top regional companies advance to compete at the national level for a grand prize worth up to \$250,000 in investment funding and services, and an opportunity to present before 2,000 attendees at The Cleantech Open’s Global Forum in November.

“Our state and the entire region need new, innovative and high-growth companies now more than ever,” said Byron McCann, co-chair of the Pacific Northwest Cleantech Open. “It’s hard enough to start any kind of business, much less one in industries as complex and capital intensive as energy and sustainability. All of us involved are ready to roll up our sleeves and help these entrepreneurs and their innovations succeed.”

Semifinalists receive a commercial software license (worth up to \$10,000); space at the National Investor Conference to showcase their technology; attendance at an intensive “business boot camp”; expert coaching in financial and legal issues, marketing, funding, intellectual property and corporate structure; and other networking opportunities.

Semifinalists will present their final business plans and investor pitches to a judging committee of

investors and experts, which will select the three finalists at the regional event in October in Seattle. Those finalists will compete with others from four regions around the U.S. for the national grand prize.

The Solar Awning is a modular system is made up of conventional photovoltaic cells and shading, but with a unique assembly. The awning attaches to a building's exterior and shades windows while reflecting light back inside. Elzeyadi and his colleagues have tested the awning's performance on the side of a university building.

The awning generates six to eight times the energy it takes to light the building and lowers temperatures inside, reducing cooling needs.

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