

SFU Press Releases Collection

These archival copies have been generated from web press releases maintained and originally written by SFU Communications and Marketing. Where possible, an effort has been made to preserve the public comments left on the website as well as any included photos or other images. All textual content should be faithful to the original press releases; contact numbers have been removed but they have not otherwise been altered in any way. However, this collection of documents spans multiple generations of web authoring software and not all formatting will be exact.

L-r: Julianne Hills, manager, community partnerships and corporate social responsibility at Coast Capital Savings; Benjamin Britton, president and CEO of Ionomr and SFU chemistry PhD student; and Lawrie Ferguson, chief marketing and strategy officer at Coast Capital Savings

MEDIA RELEASE

Clean tech venture Ionomr wins Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize

February 19, 2016

[Tweet](#) [Facebook](#) [Pinterest](#) [Email](#) [Print](#)

Contact:

Benjamin Britton, President and CEO, Ionomr, benjamin_britton@sfu.ca

Shirin Escarcha, Venture Connection, 778.782.8101, venture1@sfu.ca

Allen Tung, University Communications, 778.782.3608, allent@sfu.ca

Photo: <http://at.sfu.ca/hBFCYG>

A Simon Fraser University student venture that is helping to revolutionize the clean technology sector has taken first place in the fifth annual Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize competition.

The competition, presented by SFU Venture Connection in partnership with Coast Capital Savings, was held at SFU's Segal Building at the Vancouver campus on Feb. 10.

Prizes of \$3,500 and \$2,000 cash, courtesy of Coast Capital Savings and SFU Innovates, were awarded to Ionomr and second-place Ophthalight Digital Solutions Inc. The awards recognize their entrepreneurial excellence and the success of their growing, stable companies.

Ionomr locally manufactures Aemion—the most durable, high performance, anion-exchange membrane in the world.

Anion-exchange membranes drive the performance of many clean technology innovations in the energy storage and water treatment sectors.

Ionomr's Aemion is more durable, more versatile, and allows greater device performance than existing materials.

Steven Holdcroft, SFU chemistry department chair and professor, is Ionomr's technical director and Benjamin Britton, an SFU PhD student in Holdcroft's research group, is the president and CEO. Timothy Peckham, an SFU research associate, is the chief technical officer and Titichai Navessin, an SFU alumnus, local businessperson and entrepreneur, is the CFO.

"This prize will help us immensely to refine our business model, extend our intellectual property and deal with the issues of early-stage growth," says Britton. "I am very grateful to SFU Venture Connection for the immense amount of work they put into this, to Coast Capital Savings and all the other sponsors."

Ophthalight Digital Solutions Inc., led by Yaser Roshan, Ehsan Daneshi, Younes Rashidi and Farzad Hamidi, provides accurate, portable and automated device for eye tests—named O-Glass—for physicians who need to diagnose and monitor patients for optic neuropathy, glaucoma and diabetes.

The Venture Idea Prize, which is awarded to an early-stage company with a vision and a strong execution plan for its venture, went to Heilu.

Heilu, spearheaded by Jorge Hoyos and Chris Blachut, creates nutritious insect-based whole food powder. Along with \$1,000 cash, also courtesy of Coast Capital Savings and SFU Innovates, Heilu will be receiving “Lunch with a Hero,” provided by the SFU Alumni Association.

“Coast Capital Savings’ community promise is to help build a richer future for youth in our communities,” says Don Coulter, president and CEO, Coast Capital Savings. “Partnerships like this one with Simon Fraser University, through the Venture Connection program, help us realize that promise.

“This year’s participants impressed us with their innovation and passion, showing that British Columbia’s entrepreneurial spirit, especially among young people, is alive and well. On behalf of Coast Capital Savings, I would like to congratulate all of this year’s participants, and especially this year’s winners Ionomr, Ophthalmic Digital Solutions and Heilu.”

In addition to cash prize, Ionomr also won:

- A legal services package, sponsored by McCarthy Tetrault LLP (valued at \$25,000);
- An accounting and tax compliance services package, sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers (valued at \$12,000); and
- A digital strategy package, sponsored by Invoke (\$5,000).

All three winning companies also shared the following awards:

- Executive luncheons and business plan review sessions, sponsored by Coast Capital Savings;
- Annual Surrey Board of Trade memberships, sponsored by the Surrey Board of Trade; and
- Annual Vancouver Enterprise Forum memberships.

Since 2008, Coast Capital Savings has been supporting the SFU Venture Connection program, which provides support for student ventures from initial idea to business validation. It offers an early-stage business incubator, mentorship, co-op terms, competitions, networking, speaker events, workshops, seminars, and other business resources. More than 3,200 individuals have participated since 2008 in its range of programs, with development services provided to more than 500 student-venture teams.

LEARN MORE:

- [Media Advisory: Six SFU teams move on to Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize finals](#)
- [SFU’s Venture Connection program](#)
- [Coast Capital Savings Venture Prize competition](#)

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada’s engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada’s leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia’s three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 135,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

- [For the Media](#)
- [For Faculty and Staff](#)
- [About SFU](#)
- [SFU News](#)

[Admission](#)
[Programs](#)
[Learning](#)
[Research](#)
[Community](#)
[About](#)

CONNECT WITH US

[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Twitter](#)
[YouTube](#)

[Maps + directions](#)
[Library](#)
[Academic Calendar](#)
[Road Report](#)
[Give to SFU](#)
[Emergency Information](#)

CONTACT US

Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6