

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 19, 2012

MEDIA CONTACT

Ali Solomon, Biomimicry 3.8 Institute
406-728-4134 x300, alis@biomimicrygroup.com

Finalists in Biomimicry Student Design Challenge Announced

Over the past few months, university students from around the world have been working on a unique design challenge that uses biomimicry to design solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Today, the Biomimicry 3.8 Institute, which organized the third annual Biomimicry Student Design Challenge, announced that 12 teams from 7 countries have been named finalists in the competition.

“We’re impressed by the level of innovation and talent represented in all of the finalists,” said Biomimicry 3.8 Institute’s Megan Schuknecht, director of university education. “This is the first time that we’ve opened the competition to any student team in the world, and we were thrilled to receive submissions from teams as far away as Iran and India. That response underscores the excitement the world has for biomimicry as a tool for sustainable innovation.”

Teams from Canada, India, Iran, Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Italy, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and the United States submitted proposals with design ideas ranging from snail-inspired architecture for desert climates to vertical hydroponic systems inspired by hickory trees to new manufacturing techniques for polymer products. The winning team will be announced February 27, 2012, and will receive a prize of \$5,000. Design abstracts from every team that participated can be found on www.biomimicrydesignchallenge.com.

“Biomimicry is a new enough discipline that many of the participating teams are learning the fundamentals of biomimicry at the same time that they’re putting those tools to use on their specific design challenge,” said Schuknecht. “That’s exactly what we’re hoping to create with this competition: a learning opportunity that doubles as a way to create innovative solutions to some of the world’s most pressing sustainability challenges.”

This year’s competition launched in September 2011 and attracted 50 entries from teams located in 14 US states and 10 countries. The challenge specifically stated that biomimicry must be used to design a solution that results in more efficient energy utilization and ultimately reduces greenhouse gas emissions, ideally in the students’ local environment. The main criteria were that the solution must be biomimetic and feasible, and the teams must evaluate their designs using Life’s Principles (design lessons from nature). Students were also highly encouraged to work in interdisciplinary teams

“We wanted students from different academic backgrounds to work together because biomimicry takes an interdisciplinary approach to innovative, sustainable design. Biologists can explain how organisms employ specific survival strategies, but other disciplines, such as chemists, engineers, designers, architects, and business leaders are critical to moving the biological strategy from concept to research to development to marketing. That collaborative experience is invaluable for students who want to practice biomimicry in the workplace,” said Schuknecht.

Design proposal finalists will be judged by an external panel of innovators, including Janine Benyus (Biomimicry 3.8), Graham Hill (TreeHugger founder), and David Oakey (Interface). Judges will evaluate designs according to solution creativity, potential for impact, presentation quality, team collaboration, and Biomimicry 3.8 Institute’s Life’s Principles.

The Biomimicry Student Design Challenge received funding from the Merck Family Fund.

The Biomimicry 3.8 Institute is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2005 to promote the study and imitation of nature’s remarkably efficient designs, and to bring together teachers, students, scientists, engineers, architects, and innovators who can use natural models to create sustainable technologies. The Institute’s mission is to nurture and grow a global network of people who are learning from, emulating, and conserving life’s genius to create a healthier, more sustainable planet.

###