

Venture Launched by UCSB Materials Student Receives Gates Foundation 'Grand Challenges' Grant

Materials doctoral student James Rogers has received a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Exploration grant for aPEEL Technology



[Materials](#) PhD student James Rogers took home the grand prize in the [2012 New Venture Competition](#), hosted by UCSB's [Technology Management Program](#). Since then, his venture - [aPEEL Technology](#) - has attracted national attention for using natural plant extracts that create an ultrathin preservation barrier that can be applied to fruits and vegetables.

Rogers has recently been awarded \$100,000 in funding from the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Exploration](#) (GCE) grant program from their recent funding round of \$21 million. According to their news announcement, the grant program "funds innovative ideas to tackle key global health and development problems." GCE is a \$100 million initiative that has funded more than 800 projects in nearly 50 countries. Successful projects have the opportunity to receive a follow-up grant of up to \$1 million.



When produce growers can lose roughly 20% of their crop to spoilage even with refrigeration, the potential impact of aPEEL technology as an organic, non-toxic preservative could offer solutions for the global food industry as well as people in developing nations. According to the Gates Foundation news release, the technology "can protect crops from bacteria, fungi, and insects; reduce crop

destruction; and possibly extend the foods? shelf life without refrigeration." The chemistry behind aPEEL Technology is a formula that uses a low cost spray coating procedure that prevents the two main causes of spoilage: water loss and oxidation. Patents for their technology are pending.

Images



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