BY VERNON FERNANDEZ ('04 EEE)

STEP INTO THE FUTURE

Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and *InnoHub* at BITS Pilani

THE newly launched Technology Business Incubator has been. set up by BITS in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology. **TBI@BITS** is an initiative to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the field of VLSI and Embedded Systems. This is one of the only Technology Business Incubators set up around the country to offer the resources it has.

TBI is exactly what the name suggests, an incubator. It is a chance for fledgling businesses to grow. The basic aim of the TBI initiative is to encourage entrepreneurship in Pilani, and to allow a larger audience to make use of the facilities available at BITS.
Any startup seeded out of TBI will be provided with office space for 18 months. These offices are furnished with all the necessary facilities, including facilities for Broadband Internet and tele-conferencing. The entrepreneurs would also be given access to the tools and resources of the Oyster Lab and the Embedded Systems lab. Obtaining access to tools like these will cut down on almost 60% of the hurdles that a start-up faces. Also available will be free access to the library and other facilities at BITS. These entrepreneurs could also approach the faculty for help from time to time.

Helping out at every stage will be the Center for Entrepreneurial Learning (CEL), BITS Pilani who will provide all the possible business support in the form of mentoring, access to seed funding and networking events. The entire program can be availed of by anyone, though preference may be given to BITSians. The entrepreneurs will only have to pay a nominal fee for all the services. Being on campus also gives them the opportunity to involve on-campus students in their work in the form of projects. Although the TBI has been set-up to incubate VLSI and embedded systems design companies, the initiative may also expand to other disciplines, if the participants wish to use other labs of the institute. Prof. S Gurunarayanan, the co-coordinator of the project hopes that in 5 years, not only will TBI be self-sufficient and self-sustaining, but it will have fostered businesses which will in turn provide more employment for the masses.
CEL also kicked off another initiative this year titled *InnoHub*. The publicity material put-up by CEL proclaims "*We openly discriminate… between those who innovate and those who don't.*" Not mincing words at all, *InnoHub* aims to create an ecosystem that guides BITSians interested in doing research in any field. *InnoHub* will connect alumni, faculty and the students to backup new research ideas with technical know-how, mentoring, funding and other resources. In time, a few ideas from *InnoHub* might be realized using the TBI platform.

The last date for submitting project ideas for this year has just passed. After an initial screening, by a panel of distinguished members of the BITSian faculty, the best research ideas will be given all the necessary resources and support possible. Ideas ranging from artificial neural networks to new areas of research in bio-pharmacy have been received.

ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT

Both TBI and *InnoHub* necessitate a network of minds outside academia, which have worked in the industry and know industry and market requirements. CEL is in the process of building a network of mentors from BITSian alumni, as well as through their referrals, in order to help the students and entrepreneurs get in touch with experts in their fields. This will allow the student or entrepreneur to gain valuable experience and know-how, besides real-world exposure.

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TBI contacts
Prof. S Gurunarayanan, Coordinator
sguru@bits-pilani.ac.in

Anurup Mitra, Program Manager
anurup@bits-pilani.ac.in

InnoHub contacts

Chinmay Kulkarni, Project-lead
www.celbits.org
Abhilash Ravishankar, President, CEL.
cel@bits-pilani.ac.in