

Grove City alumni get \$10K investment in robotics company

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Staff report

GROVE CITY, PA.

Grove City College alumni Orion Correa ('13) and Jake Loosararian ('13) will receive a \$10,000 seed investment from Ben Franklin Technology Partners to help their startup company, Gecko Robotics, move forward in developing a robot.

Gecko Robotics originated at the Grove City College Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation's VentureLab (under the Highmark Business Innovation Center at Grove City College), and is a client of the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#), a business incubator in Hermitage, Pa.

Its magnetic, crawling robot will be designed and equipped with an ultrasonic test system that can easily measure the thickness of the combustor tubes without a team of workers perched on scaffolding on the plant floor.

"Our vision is to preserve and improve livelihoods of everyday people through innovative technologies," said Loosararian, Gecko's vice president. "Ben Franklin Technical Partners and the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#) have enabled Gecko Robotics to materialize this vision in an effort to improve an industry we as Americans depend upon."

Correa and Loosararian discovered coal-burning power plants lose power generation revenue if there is an outage, and a full ultra-sonic inspection conducted during regularly scheduled plant maintenance is very labor-intensive and expensive. For that reason, plants may postpone the testing and then find themselves with complications. With regular robotic inspections, however, the company could identify tube trouble spots before the pipes actually burst and force a shutdown.

Yvonne English ('97), interim executive director of The Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation at Grove City College, praised the partnership.

"This investment by Ben Franklin Technology Partners shows that the entrepreneurial ecosystem that we are creating is picking up proverbial steam," she said. "Here we have a company that started at Grove City College and continued to be supported by a local incubator, the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#), after graduation. This seed investment is the next logical step to continue the growth of this promising startup. It's a true win for our entire region."

Ben Franklin's investment will help Gecko Robotics further develop a customized robot with UT sensor heads. Gecko Robotics has an order from Scrubgrass Generating Co., a company Gecko's officers met during their college engineering project, to use their prototype to inspect the boiler and then verify the data output with the plant engineer.

Correa, Gecko Robotics president, said it's hard to imagine that it all started from a senior engineering project at Grove City College.

"It's our goal to use the Ben Franklin funding to get us on the road to setting up a sustainable inspection service platform," he said. "We are hoping to find ourselves in the position of conducting annual robotic UT inspections in at least 10 Pennsylvania coal power plants within the next couple of years."

For information on Gecko Robotics, visit www.geckorobotics.com.

The award-winning Ben Franklin Technology Partners is one of the nation's most-successful technology-based economic development programs. Since 1982, BFTP has provided early-stage and established companies with funding and business assistance and access to a network of innovative expert resources.