The idea for Apeel Sciences came to CEO James Rogers in 2011 while driving through the agricultural land of central California. He realized the issue surrounding global food waste was not a problem of “growing fresh produce – The problem was storing it after it was harvested.” James applied his Ph.D. in Materials Engineering and his entrepreneurial skills acquired from obtaining a certificate from UCSB’s Technology Management Program and created ApeelSciences. Their main products, Edipeel and Invisipeel, work to extend shelf life and keep produce fresh for up to 5 times longer than their natural rate of decay. The product is a natural plant-based, non-chemical, solution that protects both crops and harvested produce to eliminate food waste, increase food quality, and reduce water use. They have attracted the attention of many in the agriculture field.

James entered UCSB’s New Venture Competition (NVC) in 2012 and won the top prize, setting up the launch of Apeel Sciences and securing the company’s first funding. James took advantage of the resources available to him at UCSB, mainly UCSB’s core facilities and the rigor and the structure of the NVC. However, if you listen to him speak today on the subject, he’ll tell you that Apeel would have benefitted significantly from having physical space on campus to incubate the business and the technology. James believes that having access to such resources would have accelerated Apeel’s progress by as much as two years.

“Apeel Sciences creates edible products from natural plant extracts that allow organic and conventional growers to reduce reliance on pesticides, increase product quality, and provide superior shelf life.”

The New Venture Competition is the starting point for many successful UCSB companies. Similar to Apeel, after startups excel in the New Venture Competition they have nowhere to go to continue development of their product and their business. Money from the SEED-SB grant has been dedicated to strengthening these resources to offer startups critical support, especially in their early stages when they are most vulnerable. These resources include expansion of the on-campus Technology Incubator.
with the addition of wet lab space that will be accessible to all UCSB startups, and The Garage startup incubator which will offer work space and a variety of programming to facilitate the transition from the academic setting to the real world. Other resources include multiple workshops and programs designed to assist and inform new startups of the many resources available to them, such as The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) I-Corps program. These added resources will assist in the acceleration and growth of UCSB startups as well as increase their opportunities for networking, mentoring, and enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

Apeel Sciences has recently moved its headquarters from downtown Santa Barbara to Goleta acquiring around 100,000 square feet and $10 million worth of new lab equipment. They have recently expanded to over 70 employees and continue to grow their business and its surrounding economy.

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http://apeelsciences.com/