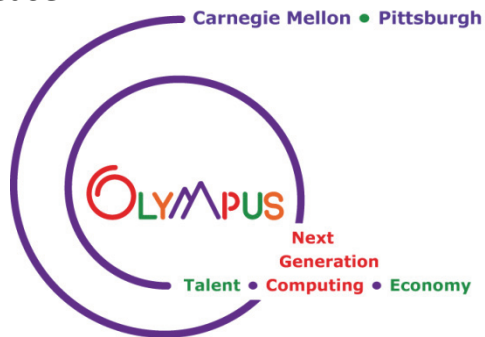


# Project Olympus Press Release



## Project Olympus PROBE has been acquired by Google Inc.

**ReCAPTCHA Inc., a Carnegie Mellon start-up and Project Olympus PROBE, has been acquired by Google Inc. This is a great outcome for reCAPTCHA's founder, Luis von Ahn, assistant professor of computer science, for Carnegie Mellon –and definitely for Project Olympus! It demonstrates that the Olympus vision and model is working.**

Project Olympus, an innovation center founded and directed by Professor Lenore Blum in the Carnegie Mellon School of Computer Science, is an outgrowth of the US National Science Foundation seeded ALADDIN Center, also co-directed by Blum, which promotes the synergy between algorithm theory and applications. The vision and mission of Olympus is to take world class university research to the commercialization stages by providing advice, incubator space and investor connections to help faculty and students explore the commercial potential of their ideas.

A unique feature of Olympus is that it is housed within the academic arena and so both understands and has direct access to faculty, students and their innovative ideas. At the same time, Olympus collaborates closely with enterprise creation groups on and off campus bridging cultures, building trust, and benefitting from the vast expertise available from these many communities. Since it started operation 2 ½ years ago with seed funding from the Heinz Endowments, Olympus has sponsored 23 projects called PROBEs (problem oriented explorations). In addition to support and assistance provided from core Olympus funds, faculty and student PROBEs have received approximately \$1.3million in funding from university and outside sources. Five companies have been launched, 8 more are in process.

An inhouse business advisor, Kit Needham and embedded entrepreneur, Babs Carryer, guide student and faculty PROBEs from the start. Frequent "Show&Tells" and CONNECTS events showcase Olympus PROBEs to the wider public and investment communities and foster essential contacts and networking.

ReCAPTCHA is an outgrowth of the ALADDIN Center's CAPTCHA project. CAPTCHAs are those ubiquitous distorted characters you have to read to prove that you are human and not an automated intruder. ReCAPTCHAs go further: when you read the distorted characters you are helping digitize snippets of old texts that are not well recognized by currently available optical character recognition.

One of the key motivations for starting Project Olympus was to create an environment that would enable projects like CAPTCHA/reCAPTCHA and students and faculty like von Ahn (who was an ALADDIN graduate student) to grow and thrive in the region. It was just such an environment that helped encourage von Ahn, who had a multitude of job options (including offers from every major university and company in the US), to continue and develop his ideas at Carnegie Mellon.

**Successes like reCAPTCHA demonstrate the viability of Olympus and inspire Olympus onward. Says von Ahn, "I think Project Olympus is already having a huge positive impact in the region, and I expect many more great things to come out of it."**

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**Check out the Project Olympus website:** <http://olympus.cs.cmu.edu/>

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