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## McGovern incubator embraces Embark and Ecolectro

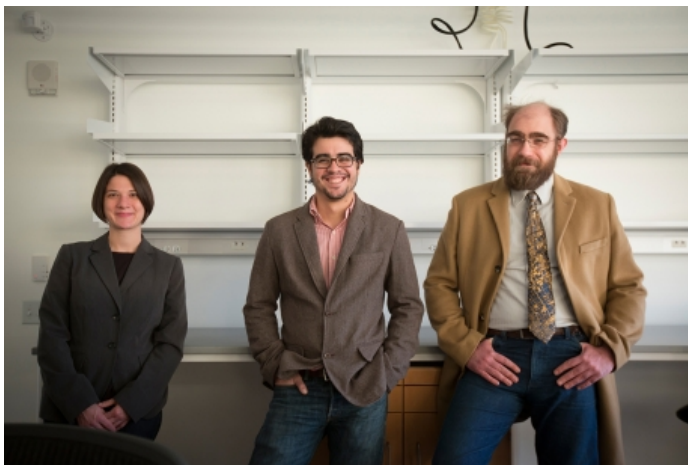
By Blaine Friedlander

To kick off the new year, Cornell's [Kevin M. McGovern Family Center for Venture Development in the Life Sciences](#) welcomed two startup companies to its incubator space Jan. 7: Ecolectro, which aims to make cost-effective, renewable energy technology, and Embark Veterinary, which seeks to apply a new canine genetic testing platform to help keep dogs healthy.

"Embark and Ecolectro embody the essence of Cornell. Both heavily use university research and technology, and both are getting ready to extend it out for world good. I'm very excited about both ventures," said Lou Walcer, director of the McGovern Center, which fosters early-stage Cornell life science startups, with a focus on accelerating research. It also helps companies to develop products, validate business plans and strengthen management teams.

Embark Veterinary will use cutting-edge genetics to help determine disease risks and other important aspects of a dog's unique genetic profile. It was founded by [Adam Boyko](#), assistant professor in biomedical sciences at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine, and by CEO Ryan Boyko, Adam's brother.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to use and leverage Cornell's resources," said Adam Boyko. "There is a lot of alumni and student support that – as a new company – you can tap into."



Jason Koski/University Photography

From left, Ecolectro's Kristina Hugar, Gabriel Rodriguez-Calero and Robert Lewis enjoy their new laboratory space at the McGovern Center.



Jason Koski/University Photography

Adam Boyko, right, and David Riccardi flank McGovern Center Director Lou Walcer, as they receive a ceremonial key to their new space.

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Embark will license Cornell research and technology. “With the veterinary school here, there are many people who can help us evaluate our product – so there are a lot of opportunities,” said Adam Boyko.

Through the development of high-performance materials and polymers, Ecoelectro aims to make sustainable technology – for example, fuel cells – a reality by making it cost competitive with fossil fuels, explains Gabriel Rodriguez-Calero, Ph.D. '14, the company's CEO.

Ecoelectro will advance novel polymers with promising characteristics like high mechanical strength and chemical stability developed by the company's chief science officer, Kristina Hugar, Ph.D. '16, for her doctoral dissertation. This work can be applied to fuel cells, electrolyzers (fuel cells in reverse), water desalination membranes and gas separation.

**Ecoelectro** is one of the startup companies that participated in [NEXUS-NY](#), an energy company incubator. Also, Rodriguez-Calero received a Small Business Innovative Research Award from the National Science Foundation for \$150,000.

Rodriguez-Calero said Ecoelectro will dive into scientific research immediately, as the laboratory started operating in Weill Hall on Jan. 8. “We hit the ground, running,” he said.