The Gustavson Greenshifters, BCom students Vinson Chen, Jennifer Sallows, Rebecca Staynor, and Bohan (AJ) Qin, have reached the finals in Walmart Canada’s Green Student Challenge!

Their idea: to create a recycling program in China that transforms used chopsticks into oriented strand board, making a high-end building material from a free resource and generating a positive "greenshift" in China by removing 45 billion chopsticks from landfills.

The Greenshifters got their start way back in September when they were assigned to work together for Mission Impossible*, the BCom program’s creative and exciting team-building exercise. Along with all 240 of their incoming colleagues, the students had four hours to dream up and refine an innovative and sustainability-related business idea that would be a good fit in the home country of the international student on the team. Then they presented their idea to academic, business and community judges and took home the top prize that day: chocolate bars, copies of Switch, and heaps of glory.

They approached Gustavson PhD student Richard Tuck for help when they entered the Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition in Seattle later in the fall.

“Anyone, at that age and just being introduced to business, who can view waste as a resource, let alone a resource for high value products, is someone to look out for,” Tuck says. “These guys impressed me.”

Undaunted by an early loss at GSEC, the team pressed on with the Walmart competition and at the end of this month, the Greenshifters will go head to head with four other teams in the Big TO.

The same day, those five competitors will be whittled down to two, which will build their cases one last time and present again to judges who are CEOs of some of Canada’s biggest businesses.

With the innovation, intelligence and commitment they’ve already shown, Chen, Qin, Sallows and Staynor might soon be joining their ranks.

Aerovert en route to France?
Aerovert is the Gustavson undergraduate team of Darrin Mah, Aaron Larmour, Hayden Bally, and Steven Atkinson. They beat 500 teams from around the globe to go to the second round of Airbus’s Fly Your Ideas contest. Along with faculty mentor Josh Ault, they’ll find out in late April whether they’ll be among the five teams pitching to the Airbus folks in France in June.

Their idea: electric taxiing motors in aircraft wheels that would save 2,400 litres of fuel per flight plus allow planes access to remote airfields with less-than-immaculate landing strips.

Like the Gustavson Greenshifters, Aerovert also got its start at the seminal Mission Impossible Impossible*.

*The name Mission Impossible incorporates the initials of Gustavson’s four pillars: International, Integrative, Innovative, and Sustainable/Socially Responsible. Because MI planning and execution call on expertise and collaboration from staff and faculty throughout Gustavson as well as the broader community, the event itself exemplifies the pillars for the students. It shows them from Week One that all of Gustavson walks the talk.