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Six Finalists Selected to Compete in \$2.75 Million GENIUS NY Competition

Teams from across U.S. invited to yearlong accelerator program at The Tech Garden

Syracuse – GENIUS NY, a business accelerator program at CenterState CEO’s Tech Garden, today introduced six finalist teams that have been selected to compete for the competition’s \$2.75 million in prizes. The companies, which are developing innovations in the unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and the internet of things (IoT) sectors, were selected from a pool of 250 submissions. Upon contract completion, the six finalists from across the country will formally enter the accelerator program to grow their businesses in Syracuse over the course of the competition.

The program, which is funded by Empire State Development in a model similar to Buffalo’s highly successful 43North program, will invest more than \$3 million in six companies over the course of the year-long competition – making it the largest business accelerator competition for the UAS industry in the world. The advancement of the GENIUS NY program builds on the progress of *CNY Rising*, the region’s award-winning strategic plan to generate robust economic growth and community development.

“GENIUS NY epitomizes Governor’s Cuomo’s commitment to creating a vibrant, innovative and entrepreneurial economy in Central New York,” said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky. “This initiative connects startups with the tools and resources they need to grow and succeed, and ultimately create jobs for New Yorkers in cutting-edge industries in Upstate New York. The six finalists announced today represent the best of the best in forward-thinking innovation – and their participation in GENIUS NY will help these companies develop and anchor their businesses in Central NY, further solidifying the region as a global hub for emerging sectors.”

“The GENIUS NY program builds on our progress to create a global hub for UAS in our region,” said Rob Simpson, president of CenterState CEO. “We are excited to welcome these teams and their next-generation technologies to The Tech Garden and to Central New York, and we are committed to helping them grow and lead the future of the unmanned and internet of things industries in the region.”

The selected teams are:

AutoModality (California), is dedicated to creating autonomous mobile systems that sense, explore, and analyze the world around us. They are currently focused on inspection of agriculture and infrastructure assets.

Ascent AeroSystems (Arizona), designs, manufactures, sells, and supports small unmanned aerial vehicles. The company has designed a unique vehicle configuration that is superior to typical multirotors.

EZ3D (Virginia), using low cost drones, allows professionals to photograph, inspect and measure buildings without climbing a ladder or waiting for a dated aerial report. Repair estimates, claims adjusting, and solar installation can be done on-demand in a fraction of the time and cost, replacing traditional methods for a billion plus dollar market.

Akrobotix (Syracuse), develops robust and stable autonomous vision-inertial navigation systems (ROSAVINS). They are developing autopilot products for reliable and safe unmanned ground, aerial, and marine vehicles based on the proprietary ROSAVINS technology and guaranteed to be safe and reliable.

SkyOp (Canandaigua), is an unmanned aerial systems training company. They deliver classes directly and through workforce development partnerships currently at a growing list of 12 community colleges in four states.

OmniMesh (Syracuse) is designing a wireless network protocol that is more reliable, secure, and convenient than current Internet routing. The OmniMesh network will boost drone safety and security, and greatly expand the feasibility of drone control and data transmission beyond visual line of sight.

The teams arrived at The Tech Garden this month. Throughout the program, teams will engage with community leaders, mentors, and advisors from leading companies in Central New York while also participating in tourism activities in the region. The goal is to encourage all participants to establish roots here and continue to grow their business. In the event any of the selected teams decide to pursue other opportunities, a highly qualified alternate finalist will be selected.

“This region has the raw materials needed to help these companies succeed and grow in this important sector,” said Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney. “We look forward to supporting these emerging companies and helping them put down roots in Onondaga County so they can have a future in an industry in which the region is a global leader.”

The grand prizes will be announced at an event in March, where teams will compete live by pitching their technologies to a panel of judges. Three grand prize investments - \$1 million, \$600,000 and \$400,000 - will be awarded. The remaining runner-up teams will each receive a \$250,000 investment.

“The teams will create new opportunities for economic growth and support an emerging industry related to unmanned systems in Central New York,” said Rick Clonan, VP of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at CenterState CEO. “I am already impressed with the high quality of the teams and their interest not only in growing their businesses but also helping the region lead this industry sector.”

Beyond the grand prize investments, participants will have access to some of the region's premier startup programming, including business planning, industry specific mentorship, and access to vetted service providers offering startup friendly terms. As part of this effort, participants will be integrated into the larger regional effort to grow unmanned aerial systems in Central New York and the Mohawk Valley and will have access to world-leading infrastructure and testing assets when they come online. Participants also receive stipends for operating capital and subsidized rent, and will also have opportunities to connect with investors for follow on funding.

"The GENIUS NY program is a perfect example of how Oneida County and CenterState CEO's strong partnership is solidifying Central New York and the Mohawk Valley as the epicenter of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the nation," said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. "Together we are spurring unparalleled innovation that is driving the Upstate economy to new heights."

"We're thrilled to welcome the UAS teams to the region and we are excited as their technologies can utilize the new and planned investments at Griffiss International Airport," said Larry Brinker, executive director and general counsel NUAIR Alliance. "This is a huge advantage for the finalists and we're excited to see the entire industry grow in Central New York."

"As the only UAS test site in the Northeast, Griffiss International Airport is the key driver in UAS development and advancement in the region, and we are happy to see our partnership with CenterState CEO continue to further grow the region's industry," said Oneida County Commissioner of Aviation Russell Stark. "We are excited to see where these new businesses and opportunities will take the region and the UAS industry."

To learn more about GENIUS NY visit www.geniusny.com or contact Jonathan Parry, Director of GENIUS NY at jparry@thetechgarden.com or by calling 315-345-2448.

About CenterState CEO

CenterState CEO is an independent and forward thinking economic development strategist, business leadership organization and chamber of commerce; dedicated to the success of its members and the prosperity of the region. We serve as an advocate and resource for smart business, catalyze and facilitate regional growth, and promote community prosperity through results-driven partnerships, planning and problem-solving. www.centerstateceo.com

About GENIUS NY

GENIUS NY is an in-residence business accelerator program at The Tech Garden in Central New York that goes beyond substantial direct investment. In addition to three grand prizes of up to \$1 million, \$600,000 and \$400,000, the program also offers company stipends, housing, resources, programming, and connections, making it among the largest competitions of its kind across the globe. The program is made possible by \$5 million in funding support provided by Empire State Development, New York State's chief economic development agency.

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