

GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION GRAND PRIZE WINNER OF GENIUS NY, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST BUSINESS COMPETITIONS

AutoModality Wins GENIUS NY's Grand Prize; Five Other Finalists Receive Prizes as Part Of \$2.75 Million Awarded to Six Innovative Companies that will Now Operate in Syracuse

GENIUS NY Program Builds on Progress of CNY Rising, the Region's Award-Winning Strategic Plan to Generate Robust Economic Growth and Community Development

New York State Announces \$5 Million Committed for GENIUS NY II In 2018

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the winner of the \$1 million grand prize from GENIUS NY is AutoModality, a team from California. The initiative is one of the world's largest business competitions focused on unmanned systems, cross-connected platforms and other technology-based sectors. GENIUS NY, a year-long business accelerator, awarded six finalist teams a total of \$2.75 million at its capstone *315 Finals* event last night, including prizes and investments of \$1 million, \$600,000, \$400,000 and three \$250,000 awards. The program also offers company stipends, housing, resources, programming and connections, making it among the largest competitions of its kind across the globe.

"Central New York is on the fast track to becoming a vital hub for high-tech jobs and businesses to grow and thrive in our state," **Governor Cuomo said.** "By investing in these tech startups today, we are investing in the future of this region by ensuring that New York remains a leader in growing the innovation economy for generations to come."

During the event, teams pitched their business plans to a panel of judges and a live audience. Following the pitches, all six competitors were awarded one of six investments. Additionally, the teams, which located to Central New York earlier this year, will use these investments to continue to accelerate their growth and expand their presence in the region. The state will commit \$5 million to support a second round of the business accelerator for 2018 called GENIUS NY II. GENIUS NY II applications will be accepted for three months beginning in June 2017.

"The GENIUS NY competition proves that Central New York is rising, creating well-paying jobs and generating economic opportunity across the region," **said ESD President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky.** "We believe in supporting successful economic development initiatives, so we're launching a second round of the

competition in 2018 to build on this momentum and attract more new waves of technological innovation and entrepreneurship.”

The night’s top prize of \$1 million was awarded to AutoModality, a team out of California dedicated to creating autonomous mobile systems that sense, explore, and analyze the world around us. The company is currently focused on inspection of agriculture and infrastructure assets.

Dan Hennage, CEO of AutoModality said, “AutoModality would like to congratulate the other companies on their great business plans and we are honored to be chosen first among so many talented and dedicate entrepreneurs. We’d also like to thank all of the AutoModality team that isn't here tonight for sharing in the vision we have to create great products and for helping get the company to where it is today. AutoModality is looking forward to growing our business in Central New York and contributing to the world-class ecosystem in unmanned aerial systems that exists in the region.”

Ascent Aerosystems was awarded the second place prize of \$600,000; OmniMesh was named third place, winning \$400,000; while three finalists, Akrobotix, EZ3D and SkyOp, all were awarded \$250,000. Ascent Aerospace was also named the crowd favorite in a live poll taken during the event.

“This is a perfect complement to the strategies and investments identified in Central New York’s award-winning plan for the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, which is already having an impact on the region,” **said Rich Tobe, Director of Upstate Revitalization.** “The CNY Rising plan focuses on building the UAS industry and with the investments we’ve already made in SAAB and developing a world-leading UAS Traffic Management System, the companies and entrepreneurs GENIUS has attracted to Central New York are becoming the backbone of the region’s fast-growing cluster of UAS innovation and advancement.”

Lawrence Brinker, executive director and General Counsel of the NUAIR Alliance and a competition judge said, “Each of the GENIUS NY six teams presented high quality plans which made awarding these investments exceptionally difficult for judges. Each of these teams are poised to have a positive impact on the UAS industry in the region. I look forward to working with these companies and connecting them to the resources of the NUAIR Alliance in order to foster their growth.”

Rob Simpson, president of CenterState CEO said, “The GENIUS NY program provides real investments and programmatic resources to support these high potential UAS companies. These teams will now take this investment and get right back to work growing their companies and building on their success over the next eight months here in Central New York. As they advance their technologies and platforms they are also supporting our goal to create a global hub for UAS in our region.”

Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney said, “It is exciting to see the progress these companies have made. It validates not only this program but the community's

capacity to support early stage UAS businesses through resources and mentoring. These companies are really at the forefront of this emerging industry and we are excited that they have chosen to put down roots in Central New York so they can play a role in advancing an industry in which the region is a global leader.”

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. said, “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. I am excited to see where the winners of this round of the competition will take our region’s UAS industry, and look forward to what the next round will hold.”

Rick Clonan, VP of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at CenterState CEO said, “GENIUS NY II will continue to build on the successes and strengths of this first round and create a broader network of new companies in the UAS sector in Central New York. Through this program, we are seeding the growth of the UAS sector in our region.”

GENIUS NY is funded by Empire State Development in a model similar to Western New York’s highly successful 43North program and 76West in the Southern Tier. 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.

The GENIUS NY competition and prize-winning companies strongly align with CNY Rising, which calls for major investments in the Unmanned Aircraft Systems industry in Central New York. Last November, Governor Cuomo [announced \\$30 million](#) in URI funds would be invested to develop a 50-mile flight traffic management system between Syracuse and Griffiss International Airport in Rome to advance the burgeoning Unmanned Aircraft Systems industry in Central New York. Within the 50-mile corridor, strategic investments will accelerate industry growth by supporting emerging uses of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in key Central New York industries, including agriculture and forest management, transportation and logistics, media and film development, utilities and infrastructure, and public safety. This significant URI investment followed a [\\$5 million commitment for Phase 1](#) and continues the State’s strong commitment to growing the UAS industry in Central and Upstate New York.

The 315 Finals event was sponsored by O’Brien and Gere and Gryphon Sensors. The teams business plans and pitches were judged by Larry Brinker, president & interim CEO for the NUAIR Alliance; Colonel Anthony Basile, vice president of operations for the NUAIR Alliance; Somak Chattopadhyay, managing partner at Armory Square Ventures; Jim Fayle, regional director for Empire State Development Corporation; Craig Marcinkowski, director of business development for Gryphon Sensors; David Montanaro, president and founder of Strategic Advisory Associates; Mary Ann Tyszko, senior advisor at Brainview Technologies; Marc Viggiano, former head of Saab’s Traffic Management business and founder of Niteopark.

To learn more about GENIUS NY visit www.geniusny.com.

Accelerating Central NY Rising

Today's announcement complements the "Central NY Rising," the region's comprehensive blueprint to generate robust economic growth and community development. This initiative is focused on capitalizing on global market opportunities, strengthening entrepreneurship and creating an inclusive economy. The state has already invested nearly \$3 billion in the region since 2012 to lay the groundwork for the plan which includes investing in the burgeoning unmanned aerial systems industry. Today, unemployment is down to the lowest levels since before the Great Recession; personal and corporate income taxes are down; and businesses are choosing places like Syracuse, Oswego and Auburn as a destination to grow and invest in as a result.

The \$500 million "Central NY Rising" Upstate Revitalization Initiative announced by Governor Cuomo in December 2015 will incentivize private business to invest well over \$2.5 billion – and the region's plan, as submitted, projects up to 5,900 new jobs. More information is available [here](#).

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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