

Catapulting UA Discoveries to the World

Tech Launch Arizona
March 2014

Tech Launch Arizona [1] presented its first Catapult Awards on Monday, honoring those whose work is moving UA inventions into the marketplace.

Honors were given to individuals and teams in six categories. Four awards were given to UA faculty and researchers who have demonstrated excellence as inventors and effective Tech Launch Arizona partners. Two additional awards recognized contributions from community members outside the UA.

David Allen, vice president of Tech Launch Arizona, emceed the event and **UAPresident Ann Weaver Hart** offered comments and presented the awards.

"This is the creative manifestation of our land-grant mission at its best," Hart said, regarding the process of bringing inventions born of academic research to the public. "We are creating new knowledge right at the boundaries of the frontier and thinking about how that new knowledge will apply to our lives and to our futures."

The Catapult Award recipients were:

Jeanne Pemberton, **Raina Maier** and **Cliff Coss** took home the Catapult Award for Chemistry and Physical Sciences for their work commercializing eco-friendly surfactants they developed through their research at the UA. Pemberton and Maier are both professors at the UA, and together with Coss, they are starting a new company called GlycoSurf LLC, to bring their inventions to the market. An additional award was given to **Robin Polt**, professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, who made indispensable contributions to the development of the GlycoSurf IP.

Dr. Marvin Slepian, professor of medicine and biomedical engineering and co-founder of SynCardia and other biomedical companies, was presented the Catapult Award for Biomedical and Life Sciences.

A team from the **Department of Computer Science** [2] took the Catapult Award for Information Technology. Professors **Richard Snodgrass** and **Saumya Debray**, along with **Rui Zhang**, who completed his doctorate in computer science in 2012, started a new company called Dataware Ventures to bring a new technology they invented called micro-specialization to market.

Jonathan Sprinkle, associate professor in the **College of Engineering** [3], won the Catapult Award for Engineering. Sprinkle has partnered with Tech Launch Arizona by filing invention disclosures on his closed-loop cost controlling thermostat technology, working with the Wheelhouse to create and build the start-up Acomni LLC, and being a two-time customer of the Wheelhouse Proof-of-Concept program.

For their work helping to turn the UA-developed Medication Management Center into a new company – called SinfoniaRx – Tucson businessman **Fletcher McCusker** and SinfoniaRx CEO **Kevin Boesen** were given the Catapult Award for Industry and Corporate Partnership. Boesen founded the Medication Management Center when he was an assistant professor in the UA **College of Pharmacy** [4].

UA alumnus **Patrick Marcus**, president of Marcus Engineering LLC, received the Catapult Award for Ecosystem Impact to recognize his work as a "community connector," bringing people together through a variety of efforts, including teaching children engineering, participating at the Arizona Center for Innovation and creating public art installations.

"It's these people's work that is directly changing the quality of life for people in Tucson, across Arizona and throughout the world through research, collaboration and innovation," Allen said. "They're doing more than commercializing products. They're starting new businesses, creating jobs and having a real economic impact on our city and our region."

Allen said Tech Launch Arizona plans to hold the Catapult Awards annually to highlight the work of entrepreneurial researchers and inspire others to engage in the process of commercializing their work.

"Doing the foundational scientific research that makes the UA great is essential. But then following an invention that arises out of that research through the entire process of commercialization? That takes a different kind of focus and hard work, and the people who do it successfully deserve our recognition."

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Links

[1] <http://techlaunch.arizona.edu/> [2] <https://www.cs.arizona.edu/> [3] <http://www.engineering.arizona.edu/> [4] <http://www.pharmacy.arizona.edu/>