

University Accomplishments Honored With Governor's Innovation Awards

Tech Launch Arizona
November 2019

A University of Arizona faculty member and a University spinoff won Innovator of the Year awards at the annual Governor's Celebration of Innovation Awards.

The event, presented by the Arizona Technology Council and the Arizona Commerce Authority, honors leaders and visionaries whose work contributes to the growth and prosperity of the state's technology sector.

"I am very proud of our showing at the governor's ceremony," said University of Arizona President **Robert C. Robbins** ^[1]. "All of these recipients and nominees are making huge contributions toward solving the grand challenges of our time as we move ideas from our labs to the market. Congratulations to Louise Hecker, FreeFall Aerospace, and longstanding University of Arizona supporters and leaders James Wyant and Fletcher McCusker on having their work recognized and honored in this way."

Louise Hecker ^[2], associate professor of medicine and research lead for a College of Medicine ? Tucson lab ^[3] studying highly selective Nox4 small molecule inhibitors for the treatment of fibrotic disorders, was selected to receive the Innovator of the Year Award in the academia category. Hecker was up against three other nominees, all from the University of Arizona: the Center for Innovation in Brain Science ^[4], led by **Roberta "Robbie" Diaz-Brinton** ^[5], professor of pharmacology; the Galactic/Extragalactic ULDB Spectroscopic Terahertz Observatory ^[6], led by **Christopher Walker** ^[7], a professor of astronomy and associate professor of optical sciences; and the College of Medicine ? Phoenix ^[8].

In the startup category for Innovator of the Year, the winner was FreeFall Aerospace ^[9], a UArizona startup founded to commercialize an intelligent 5G antenna system invented by Walker.

Also honored at the Oct. 24 awards ceremony were Tucson business leader Fletcher McCusker ^[10], CEO of UA Venture Capital, who was presented with the Ed Denison Business Leader of the Year Award, and professor emeritus **James C. Wyant** ^[11], founding dean of the James C. Wyant College of Optical Sciences ^[12], who was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

"The honorees at GCOI represent the greatest advocates, facilitators and contributors to our education and innovation ecosystem," said Steven G. Zylstra, president and CEO of the Arizona Technology Council. "As we continue to expand our portfolio of world-class technology firms and promising startups, the competition for these awards gets tougher. The companies and leaders on this list are truly the best and brightest in Arizona, and we look forward to recognizing them."

"The winners and finalists selected for GCOI 2019 have demonstrated incredible talent and ingenuity in the technology sector," said Sandra Watson, president and CEO of the Arizona Commerce Authority. "Their accomplishments have contributed greatly to Arizona's reputation as a leading global hub for innovation. We thank each of them for their contributions to Arizona and congratulate them on their success."

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- [3] <https://heckerlab.arizona.edu/>
- [4] <https://www.cibs.uahs.arizona.edu/>
- [5] <https://uahs.arizona.edu/leadership-team/roberta-diaz-brinton-phd>
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