



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Mentoring an Added Bonus for Pitch Presenters at UAS Tech Forum

SALINA, KS (February 12, 2019) – Depending on which economic impact report you read these days concerning the future of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), nearly all of them agree that the industry will continue to experience rapid growth in the marketplace over the next two decades.

Analysts cite various reasons for this continued expansion, including the number of technological advances being made that allow drones to be used in more varied applications.

Some of those technologies will be on display as part of the scheduled Pitch Session at this year's UAS Tech Forum scheduled for August 21-22 at Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina, Kansas.

Regarded as the anchor event for the UAS Cluster Initiative of Oklahoma and Kansas, a program funded through a contract with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Tech Forum attracts a wide array of public and private sector professionals and leaders involved in the UAS industry. Entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, technology transfer professionals, economic development officials and other service providers get together for two days of networking, information sessions, technology presentations, nationally acclaimed speakers and investment opportunities.

Amanda Radovic, program manager for the UAS Cluster Initiative, said the Pitch Session provides a way for entrepreneurs, startups, tech transfer officers and researchers to showcase their new technologies to a crowd comprised of various strategic partners who may be looking for that next big investment or licensing deal.

"Our team scours the region – really, the entire nation – looking for emerging technologies in the UAS space that we think will resonate with investors, serial entrepreneurs or licensees. We are talking about innovative and disruptive technologies such as new software, sensors, propulsion systems, batteries, any technology that relates to designing, manufacturing and flying drones," Radovic said.

To be considered for the Pitch Session, every individual or company must first fill out an online application that is available on the UAS Cluster Initiative website. Applications are then reviewed and vetted by a team of industry professionals. Selected individuals or companies will have an opportunity to request a mentor to help them. All pitch presenters must also participate in mandatory rehearsals prior to the start of the Tech Forum.

Executives from two UAS companies that made pitches during last year's Tech Forum in Broken Arrow, Okla., said the mentoring process was an invaluable exercise leading up to the event.

"[My mentors] understood what a good pitch is supposed to look like and helped me condense my presentation," said XWorks founder and president Brian Meier.

XWorks, based in Tulsa, builds unique landing stations that serve as hubs for multiple unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, to operate with little or no human involvement or interaction.

Even though XWorks is only now on the verge of officially introducing itself to prospective clients, Meier said the exposure he received while participating in the 2018 Tech Forum was beneficial nonetheless.

“We did receive some exposure from that presentation. In fact, there is an angel group that contacted me not too long ago wanting more information about my company and our technology. They also requested another in-person pitch presentation,” Meier said.

Another company that participated in last year’s Pitch Session is Helo Perspective. The Broken Arrow-based business uses drones to perform surveys and inspections of large buildings or structures such as telecommunications towers. They currently boast a nationwide network of approximately 725 certified pilots who are licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration to fly drones commercially.

Johnie Johnson serves as Helo Perspective’s president and CEO alongside company founder and COO Jake Carey. Both men tag-teamed on a quick pitch at last year’s Tech Forum and came away impressed with the whole experience. Johnson echoed the sentiments of Meier, saying that going through the mentoring or coaching process was a good exercise.

“I would encourage anyone who is considering funding or looking for partnerships or collaborative opportunities to utilize the Pitch presentation as a platform to highlight your company and showcase your expertise in the industry,” Johnson said. “It also provides an opportunity to share your vision because there are other participants at the UAS Tech Forum who are probably sharing your same vision, which may create a collaborative opportunity for that company to work with someone else and continue to grow.”

Hosts for the 2019 UAS Tech Forum include Salina Community Economic Development Organization (EDO), Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus, City of Salina, Kansas Department of Transportation – Division of Aviation, Salina Airport Authority, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce and Saline County.

“Our community is thrilled to partner with the UAS Cluster initiative and help co-host this prominent UAS event right in our own backyard,” said Mitch Robinson, executive director for Salina Community EDO. “The state of Kansas is playing a vital role in developing and launching the UAS industry across the U.S., especially right here in Salina and Central Kansas where our collaborative spirit is second to none. We look forward to working alongside our local partners and the Cluster Initiative throughout 2019 as we continue to promote the UAS Tech Forum to stakeholders across the region.”

This will mark the sixth year for the UAS Tech Forum. Last year, a record 225 people attended the event, which was held at Broken Arrow’s Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center.

For more information about the 2019 UAS Tech Forum or to apply for this year’s Pitch Session, please visit www.uascluster.com.

About the UAS Cluster Initiative

Administered by Oklahoma City-based Development Capital Networks, the UAS Cluster Initiative’s mission is to accelerate the growth of the UAS Industry by enabling established companies and emerging entrepreneurs, in particular those located in Oklahoma and Kansas, to connect, work together and gain access to national technologies, global capital, advanced business models and global markets. It accomplishes this through a variety of activities and events, including webinars, SBIR workshops, roundtable discussions, student UAS competitions and the UAS Tech Forum.