

2019

Herbert W. Vanden Brul **ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARD**



RIT | Saunders College of
Business

DR. PHILIP SAUNDERS
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
100 COLLEGE DRIVE, RIT, ROCHESTER, NY 14623

Herbert W. Vanden Brul

ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARD



Michael Mandina

President, Optimax

Mike Mandina is the co-founder and president of Optimax, a precision optics manufacturer in Ontario, N.Y. Today, the company has more than 350 teammates; more than 300 are highly skilled technicians, engineers and scientists. A master optician himself, Mike has received numerous honors and awards for his leadership and industry success.

Mike was one of the founders of the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers' Enterprise (FAME). Through his involvement with several industry organizations, Mike is committed to addressing the current skills gap and aligning the educational system with industry needs to strengthen the region by establishing a vibrant high-tech manufacturing community.



Richard Plympton

CEO, Optimax

Rick Plympton is the CEO of Optimax, a precision optics manufacturer in Ontario, NY. He provides the leadership and vision needed to position Optimax as America's largest prototype optics manufacturer.

He is actively involved in the optics industry and supporting area colleges. Rick currently sits on the Finger Lakes Community College Foundation Board, the Board of the Rochester Regional Photonics Cluster, is Vice Chair of the Finger Lakes Workforce Investment Board and is participating in an Aspen Institute Fellowship for Job Quality.

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Herbert W. Vanden Brul Entrepreneurial Award, established in 1984, is given annually to an individual who has successfully managed the development of a new "emerging" business within the Greater Rochester Community and is an inspiration for others to become an entrepreneur.

Herbert W. Vanden Brul

STUDENT ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARD



Nathan DeMario

MS, Mechanical Engineering: Thermodynamics & Fluid Mechanics

Nathan DeMario is the co-founder of Phase Innovations, LLC, a startup company using innovative technologies to improve efficiencies in cooling and dehumidification systems. Its efforts have been recognized by a \$1.1 million grant from NYSERDA to support the development and commercialization of its technology.

Nathan is a resident Clean Energy Incubator client in RIT's Venture Creations Incubator and a participant in the NextCorps Manufacturing Scale-Up program. He was the winner of RIT's 2019 Business Model Competition.



Brandon Hudson

BS, Individualized Study: Computer Science and Web & Mobile Computing

Brandon Hudson is the CEO of Connexus, a company that is set to disrupt the building management industry by streamlining the installation, maintenance and management of HVAC systems. Brandon's work with Connexus runs in tandem with his education, a custom program focused on computer science and internet technologies, while giving him access to mentors across the RIT campus. Working with RIT's Venture Creations business incubator has sharpened his business acumen as Connexus accelerates its business.



Eva Skovli

MS, Professional Studies: Digital Marketing and Communications

Eva Skovli is a deaf graduate student from Norway. She aims to be a social entrepreneur and has her own lifestyle blog. She is currently working with a startup named VeeTV. VeeTV is "the Netflix of sign language content videos." She hopes to pave the way for deaf and hard of hearing entrepreneurs by exploring innovative communication solutions to make the world more accessible.

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Herbert W. Vanden Brul Student Entrepreneurial Award, established this year, is intended to recognize outstanding RIT undergraduate or graduate student(s) who have demonstrated the potential to become successful entrepreneurs.

Herbert W. Vanden Brul



Following his military service and earning a juris doctor degree from St. John's School of Law, Rochester native Herbert W. Vanden Brul returned to his hometown in 1951 to begin his new career practicing law.

An entrepreneurial visionary in Rochester, Mr. Vanden Brul co-founded several business ventures in the region. One of his most successful, RF Communications, Inc., has since become a division of Harris Corporation. Another, the Culver Management Corporation, acquired nearly one million square feet

of local industrial space to become the home of many small start-ups companies who have improved the local economic climate.

Until his death in 2003, Mr. Vanden Brul continued to pursue his business interests. He served on the boards of Ormec Systems, Inc. and the Genesee Valley Trust Company, Inc., and was active in the cultural and educational life of the Rochester community. Mr. Vanden Brul and his wife Joan, who passed away in 2007, had a long association with RIT and were active members of the Nathaniel Rochester Society. Their two sons attended RIT.

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saunders.rit.edu/vandenbrul