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## Lyles Center honors Laval, others for dedication to entrepreneurship

Claude Laval III, founder of the Claude Laval Corporation, was presented the [Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Vision Award](#) on May 8, at the Lyles Center's annual End of the

Year Dinner showcasing students and community members who have dedicated themselves to entrepreneurship.

The dinner was held at the University House where President John D. Welty and Dr. Timothy M. Stearns, executive director of the Lyles Center, hosted the evening of awards and recognition. Fresno State faculty, staff, students, volunteers, donors, community supporters, mentors and students of the mentor program were in attendance.

The Vision Award honors an individual in the community who has positively impacted the Central Valley by recognizing its potential for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Laval is a highly regarded civic leader, entrepreneur and a co-founder of the Lyles Center Entrepreneur Mentor Program at Fresno State. He is an avid mentor in the program, and a leader to students, the community and the region.

Laval, whose Fresno-based companies have provided innovative and adaptable solutions for specific filtration issues for more than 40 years, also founded the LAKOS Separators and Filtration Systems. LAKOS is a world leader in the water filtration industry.

Laval's support for and advice to Fresno State on water and irrigation over the years was recognized by the naming of the Claude Laval Water and Energy Technology Incubator (WET Center) on campus in partnership with the Central Valley Business Incubator. The WET Center is a vital resource for innovative local entrepreneurs looking to establish or expand their business in water and energy technology and help stimulate the regional economy.

*"Claude Laval's commitment to the economic vitality of the Central Valley is second to none," said Stearns. "Claude's passion has always been to see entrepreneurs succeed; he fully understands how greater entrepreneurial activity in the Central Valley can increase the fortunes of everyone who lives here."*

The Mentor of the Year Award was awarded to Ed O'Neill, a Fresno native who has owned several businesses throughout his life. He has taken advantage of many opportunities to better the Central Valley.

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“Ed has demonstrated a commitment to molding and shaping young people’s inspirations,” Stearns said. “As a mentor he has guided countless students on their journey to achieve their entrepreneurial dreams.”

Michael Fenn, Fresno State student involved in the Entrepreneur Mentor Program, received the Betty Lou Laval Entrepreneur Mentor Award, named after Laval’s wife. Through the program, Fenn has shown commitment, made significant contributions and exemplified the program’s goals and ideals.

Steve Banevedes received the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) Teacher of the Year Award. Banevedes is a NFTE teacher at Carter G. Woodson Public Charter School in Fresno. He also received an Enterprising Educators of the Year award by the NFTE program in New York City this past April.

The Lyles Center’s Entrepreneur in Residence, Nelson Sebra, was awarded the Entrepreneurship Education Excellence Award. Sebra mentors student entrepreneurs as well as teaching entrepreneurship courses as a part-time faculty member at Fresno State. He has started nine small businesses and is involved in several community organizations.

The winner of the Spencer Entrepreneur Award was Laura Facciani, Fresno State student and owner of Facciani Photography. Facciani expressed the goals and mission of the Lyles Center through her activity in its programs to further her entrepreneurial success.

Esteban Miranda received the John “Jake” Jacobson Award, which recognizes one of the top students from the entrepreneurship option from the Craig School of Business at Fresno State. Jacobson’s motto that guides the selection of the award is “you have a hobby, not a business.” Jacobson was the past Entrepreneur in Residence and his family and friends have donated the funds to support student entrepreneurs in his name.

Other awards were also given out to students including the NFTE Student of the Year award, the Sandler Training President’s Club Award and the Sandler Training Sales Foundation Award.

“The dinner is amazing at bringing together the award recipients as well as the people who inspired and make the awards possible,” said Genelle Taylor, associate director of the Lyles Center.

“Entrepreneurship is extremely important to the prosperity of our Valley and takes hard work and dedication; all of the winners tonight exemplify these qualities.”

For more information, contact Taylor at [genellet@csufresno.edu](mailto:genellet@csufresno.edu) or 559.250.0453.

**Related links:**

- [Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) and [Lyles Center](#)
- [WET Center](#)
- [LAKOS](#)
- [Claude Laval III bio](#)

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