

Innovation will be post pandemic path

Converge, the programme to create companies from the Higher Education sector in Scotland, begins its 2021 search today for the most dynamic and creative thinkers.

The aim is to bring out the spark and creative flair from Scotland's academic community. All 18 universities support the programme financially along with Scottish Funding Council and Creative Scotland monies. This year there is a further award, the Future Tech Award sponsored by Cisco. This will be given to someone with bright ideas in areas like AI, machine learning and cloud security.

The Rose Award was introduced last year for female entrepreneurs. The award includes one-to-one mentoring with RBS Chief Executive, Alison Rose.

The awards include different levels of cash prizes and in kind support from the overall pot of £290,000.

Paul Atkinson, Chairman of the Converge Strategic Advisory Board comments, that whilst we are living through extraordinary times and campuses are mainly in lockdown, the making of an entrepreneur lies in the unerring ability to overcome any obstacle and push on regardless.

He said: "For centuries, Scotland's universities have had a great heritage in producing exceptional entrepreneurs and innovators – industrialists, engineers, naturalists,

physicians and chemists – who transcended the globe as pioneers, making their mark in so many walks of life.

“Converge upholds that long tradition of success and we believe that this year’s cohort will be no exception and will help lay out a roadmap for a prosperous future beyond the current pandemic challenge.”

At last year’s ‘virtual’ Converge 2020 final held in September, Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, commended Converge alumni for having established around 220 new companies since its inception in 2011 and creating more than 500 jobs in a range of key sectors.

She remarked that innovation through Converge is vital to Scotland’s economic well-being in helping us meet some of the greatest challenges of our time which have been emphasised by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Claudia Cavalluzzo

Claudia Cavalluzzo, Director of Converge added: “Visionary

entrepreneurs will see opportunities opening up and, as ever, Converge is the perfect springboard to showcase these remarkable ideas. Everyone saw 2021 as a year of fresh opportunity. No one believed at the start of lockdown last March, that we'd still be fighting the pandemic on all sides, ten months later. However, from setbacks come fresh opportunities!

“Entrepreneurs are intrinsically problem-solvers. We will see a new wave of innovators creating businesses that will generate value for both our economy and our society, thus offering pathways to a brighter future.”

The roster of sponsors and partners includes the Royal Bank of Scotland, Social Investment Scotland, BeyondHR, i4 Product Design, MBM Commercial and Murgitroyd, and will this year be joined by two new organisations – global technology leader, Cisco and CPI Enterprises.

www.convergechallenge.com