

[back to article](#)



Entrepreneur of Year honor goes to owner of Gator Domino's

The Butler awards aimed to encourage next crop of leaders.

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Entrepreneurs and innovators will be the ones to pull the nation out of its woes, not government or failed businesses that need propping up.

That was a common theme as the University of Florida honored successful entrepreneurs and business students to encourage the next generation of leaders at the S. Clark Butler Entrepreneur Awards on Thursday night at the Hilton UF Conference Center.

With students of the UF College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation in attendance, UF Provost Joe Glover said it was important to actualize new ideas to create products and services that create new wealth to address problems in the economy and the environment.

Center Executive Director Arnold Heggstad said students and not failing businesses represent our future. "Our job is to prepare them."

Heggstad called for a moment of silence for Clark Butler, founder of Butler Enterprises and Butler Plaza, who died last year and who was instrumental in starting the awards.

"He always believed in honoring entrepreneurs that provided role models ... and he loved the kids," Heggstad said.

Martin Schaffel, founder of Audio Visual Innovations Inc. and a UF graduate, received the Distinguished Alumnus Entrepreneur of the Year award for lifetime achievement.

Schaffel said the traits of a successful entrepreneur are the ability to sell your vision to employees, turn entrepreneurs inside the business loose, get people to

do what you want and feel good about it and help other people become successful.

Freddie Wehbe of Gator Domino's Pizza was named Gainesville Entrepreneur of the Year.

Heggestad said Wehbe bought Gator Domino's when it was one store that was losing money on SW 13th Street and turned it into the company's top seller. He now has eight locations, and other Domino's franchisees come to Gainesville to learn from him. Heggestad said Wehbe is the most cunning marketer he knows and teaches his wisdom to students at the center.

"If they just got a little, he's changed their lives," Heggestad said.

Scott Weiss, vice president and general manager of Security Technology Group at Cisco Systems in Palo Alto, Calif., was named Clark Butler Entrepreneur of the Year for UF alumni under 45.

Weiss, guest teacher at the center earlier this year, said teaching entrepreneurship is to show students how to overcome obstacles and find solutions.

Four students were named Thomas S. Johnson Entrepreneurial Scholars of the Year: Michael Cavinder, Mark Hall, Stanton Hawthorne and Cameron MacMillan.
