EPIC wins Emerald Award as UO spinouts recognized for innovation | Inside Oregon

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Two University of Oregon "spinout" companies were among three finalists for this year's Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce Emerald Award for innovation, and one of them – the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) – came away with the trophy.

EPIC was founded in 2002 by David Conley, a UO professor of educational methodology, policy and leadership.

"To our great surprise and astonishment … we won," Conley said in an e-mail following the Nov. 1 award. "The competition was quite stiff, so we view this as a wonderful recognition of EPIC's work by the community…."

The 501(c)3 non-profit organization's mission is to improve educational policy and practices that will increase student success – especially those who are historically underserved by public schools. The organization conducts various policy-related research studies, such as an ongoing project funded by a $794,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop content standards for preparing high school students to achieve college success.

The Emerald Awards are intended to honor Eugene/ Springfield businesses that contribute to the area's vitality and quality of life through sustainable business practices. Awards in five categories – growth, community caring, environmental issues, innovation and business of the year – each represent a core principle of sustainability.

This year's other UO-inspired finalist in the innovation category was ParaTools, founded in 2004 by Allen Malony, a UO professor of computer and information science, and Sameer Shende, director of the performance research lab in the university's neuroinformatics center.

ParaTools develops and applies tools for parallel computing systems, with specific expertise in high-performance computing and performance analysis. The company offers consulting expertise in parallel and distributed computing, and performance evaluation tools.