

## 23 companies selected for Start-Up NY program

Six partnering with Capital Region schools

By Madison Iszler

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ALBANY - Twenty-three businesses will partner with local colleges and universities to create jobs in upstate New York through Gov. Andrew Cuomo's highly touted Start-Up NY program.

The companies, spread across seven regions, plan to create nearly 300 new jobs and invest about \$9.8 million over the next five years, according to a release by Empire State Development. Company industries include biotechnology, craft beverage production and manufacturing.

The economic development program allows new and growing business to operate tax-free for 10 years on or near schools they're partnered with.

"From life sciences to advanced manufacturing, software development and green tech, more and more companies are finding New York State is a great place to start or grow their business," said ESD president, CEO and commissioner Howard Zemsky in a statement. "These businesses have the potential to create hundreds of jobs in throughout Upstate New York in dynamic, innovative industries, while generating millions in revenue for the local economy."

Six of the 23 businesses selected are partnering with Capital Region schools, including the University at Albany and Schenectady County Community College, and plan to invest more than \$1.2 million and create 77 new jobs.

The businesses are Brandsight, Inc., a company that works with brands to manage their domain name portfolios; New Ed, Inc., a software company; Upper Concierge Management, a company that's developing a software platform; **Kirsh Helmets, Inc., a motorcycle helmet business;** Branch



Kirsh Helmets CEO and inventor Jason Kirshon, left, with president and chief operating officer Don DeVito.

VFX, a special effects company that works with the television and film industry; and 454 Fire Training, a technical trade school. The program has been popular with tech startups in Schenectady and Troy, though critics have said that the cost of promoting Start-Up NY outweighed the benefits. In an annual report released in April, Empire State Development reported 757 jobs were created in 2016 by 141 companies - double the number from the previous year, but still a fraction of the state's more than 8 million jobs.

Last year the governor included a proposal in his fiscal 2018 budget rebranding the program. Changes included renaming it the Excelsior Business Program, simplifying the eligibility requirements, focusing more exclusively on smaller, early-stage companies and enhancing the tax benefits.

