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UCSD Marks Major Milestone With Premier Groundbreaking In Science Research Park

La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology and Gemini Science Become First to Locate in Park

By Sue Pondrom

La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology (LIAI) and Gemini Science, an LIAI industrial partner, broke ground today on the first facility to be built in the new University of California, San Diego Science Research Park. This project ushers in a new era in scientific collaboration, bringing together world-renowned research scientists and clinicians in a unique new environment on the UCSD campus.

"This groundbreaking marks a momentous occasion for the Institute, Gemini Science and UCSD," said Mitchell Kronenberg, Ph.D., LIAI President and Scientific Director. "By locating on the UCSD campus, we will bring together the talents and knowledge of some of the world's leaders in immunological research, clinical trials and patient care, concentrating immense biomedical expertise all in one location," he said. "This partnership offers great potential for a more rapid translation of scientific discoveries into treatments and cures for a wide range of diseases."

Officials from UCSD, LIAI and Gemini Science jointly celebrated the landmark event, turning over the first shovels of dirt during groundbreaking ceremonies today on the new state-of-the-art 145,000-square-foot facility. The new building will provide LIAI, one of the world's leading freestanding immunology research centers, with more space, new labs and cutting-edge equipment. Of equal importance, the prime location of the Science Research Park is expected to make it a fertile breeding ground for ideas and scientific interchange between LIAI scientists and UCSD immunology faculty. Gemini Science, a biopharmaceutical research and development company, will have executive offices and R&D labs in the Science Research Park building and will interact extensively with LIAI and UCSD researchers on biomedical problems of mutual interest.

"This project is an exciting new development for UCSD and the San Diego region and will further strengthen San Diego's position as a leading scientific hub," said UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "The UCSD Science Research Park allows us to build lasting partnerships with leading research institutes, companies dedicated to product development, and other services that support these activities. This resource will also greatly enrich our research and educational programs by creating new opportunities for collaboration with our faculty and students."

The UCSD Science Research Park encompasses 30 acres of property on the eastern perimeter of UCSD's campus, adjacent to UCSD's East Campus Medical Center complex. A committee of UCSD faculty, staff, students, and alumni developed the objectives and criteria for the Park.



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Tenants who lease land or facilities must conduct industrial, scientific and technological activities in various scientific disciplines, including medicine, life sciences, engineering, information technology, telecommunications, physical sciences, and marine sciences. As part of the lease agreement, tenants agree to participate with UCSD in research and instructional programs.

“The idea behind the UCSD Science Research Park from its inception has been to use this property not just to build buildings,” said Edward W. Holmes, UCSD Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences. “We wanted to take advantage of this land to build creative collaborations that can help us bridge the gap between laboratory research, and the practical application of new knowledge for the good of society. I can’t imagine a better anchor tenant for the first building than Gemini Science, and the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology. This is a tremendous opportunity to further expand what we can do together to improve human health.”

Katsuhiko Asano, Ph.D., Managing Executive Officer of Kirin Brewery Company in Japan and President of its Pharmaceutical Division, the parent company of Gemini Science, said the groundbreaking marks an important day for the advancement of immunological research. “We believe this superior facility, fused with the collective intellect of LIAI, Gemini and university researchers, will be a powerful combination that will lead to medical breakthroughs.”

Kazuo Kawamura, Ph.D., President of Gemini Science, said their exploration into potential new drug therapies will undoubtedly be energized by access to the outstanding scientists and clinicians brought together through the collaboration. “Being able to simply walk over and talk with other scientists and share ideas and information will be a tremendous asset to our R&D efforts,” he said. “This access may enable us to move our findings more quickly into clinical trials or conversely allow us to assist LIAI or the university to translate their discoveries into the next stage of development.”

In anticipation of the move, UCSD and LIAI formed a Center for Immunology last year, a “center without walls” that began hosting joint seminars and training activities for students. While LIAI maintains its organizational and financial autonomy, joint research projects are planned with UCSD. And with the move to the campus, officials anticipate substantial day-to-day interaction between LIAI scientists and UCSD faculty -- researchers, physicians and educators. Many of LIAI’s scientists have already become adjunct members of UCSD’s faculty.

The new center, to be completed in April 2006, will replace LIAI’s current 45,000-square-foot facility headquartered on Science Center Drive in La Jolla. The facility will house LIAI’s 14 independent laboratories and more than 200 employees, and will allow for significant growth. It will also be home to the Institute’s new Emerging Infectious Disease and Biodefense Research Center, where scientists will study emerging infections such as West Nile virus and SARS.

Frank Dixon, M.D., LIAI board chairman, said the new facility’s university proximity will enhance LIAI recruitment efforts. “UCSD produces some of the world’s most promising graduate students and postdoctoral fellows,” he said. “We will be in an excellent position to attract these graduates, which will allow us to continue to expand our top-notch scientific team.”

Founded in 1988, LIAI’s research staff includes more than 100 scientists with doctoral degrees. It was recently ranked among the top five research institutions in the world for the quality of its research in molecular biology and genetics, two disciplines important to understanding immune system function.

LIAI focuses on achieving medical breakthroughs in four major areas: autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, MS and arthritis; cancer and

stimulating immune responses against tumors; allergy and asthma; and infectious diseases of the industrialized and developing world such as West Nile virus and arena viruses.



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