

Work on research center starting

UCSD goal: Create nexus of science and industry

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The first tenants for the University of California San Diego's fledgling Science Research Park will break ground today on a new research center, marking what the university hopes will become a crossroads for academic and industrial collaboration.

Gemini Science, a wholly owned pharmaceutical subsidiary of Japan's Kirin Brewery Co., will build a \$40 million, 145,000-square-foot research facility in UCSD's new research park, a 30-acre site on the east side of the university's campus.

The building, which will be completed in the spring of 2006, also will house the La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology, a nonprofit organization that is closely aligned with Gemini and Kirin.

UCSD's research park has been decades in the making. The university obtained the land in 1964, and in 1982 went to Congress to get the deed amended so the land could be developed for industry-related scientific purposes.

The goal is to lure high-tech and biotech companies or institutes whose research meshes with the interests of UCSD scientists, creating a springboard for ideas that can be turned into practical medicines and technologies.

"The idea behind the UCSD Science Research Park from its inception has been to use this property not just to build buildings," said Edward 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."

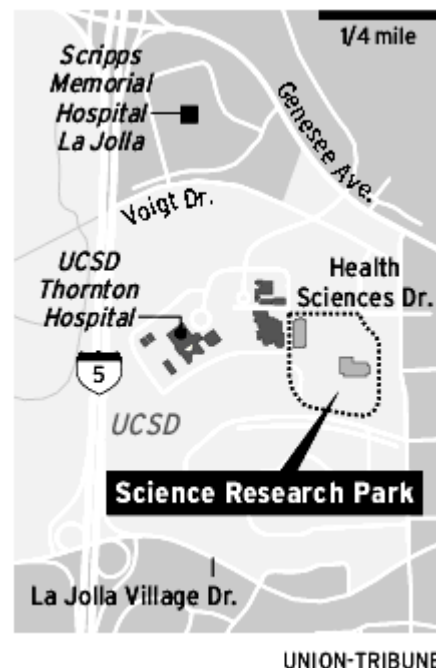
The research park has space for four more tenants of similar size. As part of the lease agreement with UCSD, tenants are required to participate with the university in research and instructional programs.

Such an effort is under way between UCSD and the La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology, which last year formed the UCSD Center for Immunology, a loose network of immunologists from both institutions who participate in seminars and graduate-student training. Many of the institute's scientists already have become adjunct members of UCSD's faculty.

The La Jolla institute has a number of research programs, but a key focus is its new Emerging Infectious Disease and Biodefense Research Center, where scientists are studying emerging infectious diseases such as SARS and West Nile virus.

Mitchell Kronenberg, president and scientific director of the institute, said the institute chose the UCSD research park because it needs room to grow and wants to exchange ideas with UCSD immunologists and clinicians.

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The institute and its 200 employees have had to make do with a relatively cramped, 45,000-square-foot building on Science Center Drive, with employee overflow going to a site in Pacific Beach.

"It's pretty crowded up here (on Torrey Pines Mesa), and we needed a bigger space," Kronenberg said. "We also wanted to be near some of the more clinically oriented UCSD investigators as we try to translate our findings into treatments, so proximity helps."

Gemini, which employs 34 people, and parent company Kirin are major financial backers of the institute, supplying about 18 percent of its budget. In return, Gemini gets first pick of discoveries and technologies that come out of the institute's research programs.

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