



## PIEDMONT TRIAD BUSINESS, ACADEMIC LEADERS WIN GRANT TO PLAN STRATEGY FOR NEW NANOBIO TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

*Little things mean a lot: \$100,000 toward state's first Center of Innovation*

GREENSBORO AND WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., Nov. 2, 2007 – A consortium of Piedmont Triad institutions has been awarded a \$100,000 planning grant from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center to establish the state's first Center of Innovation (COI), focusing on the emerging field of nanobiotechnology.

The consortium will use the funding to develop a business plan leading to an application to the Biotechnology Center for a four-year Phase 2 grant request.

The ultimate goal is to help establish the Piedmont Triad as a research hub for products and processes using very, very small particles – measured by the nanometer, or billionth of a meter. A meter is 3.28 feet. A typical human hair is about 80,000 nanometers across.

Nano-scale particles are being used in an increasing array of applications because scientists are finding they possess unique, often valuable characteristics that aren't seen in larger, more complex forms of matter.

The ground-breaking Biotechnology Center grant was made possible through the cooperation of the Piedmont Triad's three largest universities: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University; the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Wake Forest University.

The Piedmont Triad Partnership, a non-profit 12-county economic development corporation, will administer the grant for the university consortium, according to Don Kirkman, the PTP president.

When this first effort is successfully completed it will be the North Carolina Center of Innovation in Nanobiotechnology, but commonly referred to as COIN, according to Gwyn Riddick, director of the Biotechnology Center's Piedmont Triad regional office. "It will maintain a statewide focus, but its birth came in the Piedmont Triad region because of our champions, our assets and our desire to build on the nanobiotechnology sector from within. Eventually, almost anything dealing with nanobiotechnology coming out of any North Carolina university will potentially be part of the COIN."

"Nanotechnology is A&T's bread and butter," said Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, vice chancellor for research & economic development at NCA&T. "Collaboration with other universities will make us stronger, more viable and more competitive." He noted that NCA&T already receives funds to perform research in nanotechnology applications that include nanobiotechnology from the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, the Air Force Research Laboratory and other sources.

Dr. Rosemary Wander, associate provost for research and public/private sector partnerships at UNCG, said the consortium plans to foster collaboration among universities and businesses state-wide to establish North Carolina as a globally recognized resource for industry-academic interactions in nanobiotechnology – and to serve as a model for other COIs in other business sectors elsewhere in the state.

“This is a major step forward for the Piedmont Triad and for the state,” said Wander, who is also a member of the Biotechnology Center board of directors. “We needed the collaboration of these three universities to focus North Carolina’s development of this important new sector. Just as biotechnology evolved from Research Triangle Park to become a major science brand for our state, the Piedmont Triad is fast becoming the nucleus for nanotechnology’s statewide evolution.”

Dr. Mark Welker, WFU associate provost for research, said the universities’ technology transfer directors deserve a lot of the credit for the first COI award. “Those offices have very strong, collaborative, working relationships and the hope is that these relationships will serve as the foundation for helping the whole state in the area of nanobiotechnology,” he said. “COIN should be a matchmaker, liaison and one-stop shop for businesses that are interested in intellectual property, facilities, and expertise that is available in North Carolina in nanobiotechnology.”

Strings attached to the Biotechnology Center’s new COI program require recipients of the larger Phase 2 grants to demonstrate how they’ll make the project self-sustaining after the grant money runs out. And a successful Phase I grant doesn’t automatically lead to Phase 2 funding.

Locating the nano hub in the Piedmont Triad came naturally after NCA&T and UNCG established a \$60 million two-campus collaboration focusing on the ultra-tiny world of nanotechnology – the Joint School for Nanoscience and Nanoengineering. That move built on the major nanotechnology research activity that had been established at nearby Wake Forest and at NCA&T.

The COIN consortium was facilitated by research leaders at each of the participating universities, with the support of Riddick and Kirkman. Besides Radhakrishnan, Wander and Welker, support also came from Dr. Sally Shumaker, associate dean for research at Wake Forest University Health Sciences.

Technology transfer officials of each university also led the process, including Jerry McGuire of UNCG, Doug Speight of NCA&T and Michael Batalia of WFU. Also instrumental were David Carroll, director of the Wake Forest Center for Nanotechnology and Molecular Materials and Drs. Jag Sankar and Yousef Haik, nanosciences center directors at NCA&T and UNCG, respectively.

The Biotechnology Center is a private, non-profit corporation supported by the N.C. General Assembly. Its mission is to provide long-term economic and societal benefits to North Carolina by supporting biotechnology research, business and education statewide.

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