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Purdue's Discovery Lecture Series focuses on nanotechnology

Tiny steps for science, a giant leap for industrial innovation – that is the promise nanotechnology holds. And that's the focus of a national conference at Purdue University in early February.

Building on October's opening of the \$58 million Birck Nanotechnology Center at Discovery Park, Purdue will hold two national nanotechnology events on Feb. 6-8 on the West Lafayette campus. The three-day event is highlighted by a panel discussion kicking off Purdue's Discovery Lecture Series, titled "Transforming Society Through Emerging Technologies: National Nanotechnology Initiative at Five Years."

Mihail "Mike" C. Roco, chairman of the U.S. National Science and Technology Council's subcommittee on Nanoscale Science, Engineering and Technology, will lead the panel using the U.S. National Nanotechnology Initiative as a case study.

The National Nanotechnology Initiative, formed in 2000, sparked the federal government's decision to bolster funding for the emerging fields of nanoscience and nanoengineering, with roughly 70 percent of that new funding going to university-based research. Roco also is senior adviser for nanotechnology for the National Science Foundation.

"Purdue now has the most advanced facility on a college campus in this country, and possibly the world, exclusively designed for nanotechnology research," said conference coordinator George Adams, research development manager for the Birck Nanotechnology Center.

"Through this conference, Purdue can provide the spotlight on what nanotechnology research can do to improve our lives and bolster Indiana's high-tech economy. These are some of the most impressive minds in the world on nanotechnology coming to Indiana."

Panelists will cover everything from how to start a nanotech business and its advancements in treating cancer to the potential for venture capital funding and nanotechnology's applications in health-care delivery and electronics products.

The conference will begin at 1 p.m. Feb. 6 with a panel of national journalists who cover science, business and technology issues. Each panelist will give a 10-minute presentation about nanotechnology and then take questions from the audience.

The inaugural Discovery Lecture Series, "Transforming Society through Emerging Technologies: NNI at Five Years," led by Roco then begins at 3 p.m. The first half of the Discovery Lecture Series focuses on the transformation of nanotechnology in society. At 5:30 p.m.

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Purdue President Martin C. Jischke will welcome a panel of experts that will focus the discussion on public interest issues in nanotechnology – from health care to ethics and policy.

The Feb. 6 panel discussions are free and open to the public.

The Building for Advanced Technology III workshop also will take place Feb. 6-8 as part of the nanotechnology conference. Expected to draw 125 people from both industry and academia, the workshop will connect owners, users and facility managers of buildings used for advanced technology and nanotechnology research and development.

Attendees must preregister for the Building for Advanced Technology III event. The registration fee is \$375.

"This year the workshop venue is Purdue because the Birck Nanotechnology Center building is the most advanced facility of its kind," Adams said. "I know workshop attendees are looking forward to touring the building."

During the workshop, presentations also will focus on the state of the estimated \$400 million in annual federal funding specifically designated for nanotech research, Adams said.

Since the National Nanotechnology Initiative was launched five years ago, an estimated \$3.8 billion has been made available through the NSF and other federal agencies, including about half of that for nanotech research alone.

The Building for Advanced Technology workshop is being organized by Purdue along with the National Nanotechnology Initiative, the Naval Research Laboratory and HDR Architecture Inc., which was the lead designer on Purdue's Birck Nanotechnology Center.

HDR, based in Omaha, Neb., designed the Advanced Measurement Laboratory at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, Md. That \$235 million lab is considered the most advanced nanoscale standards facility in the world.

The Birck Nanotechnology Center, which opened on Oct. 8, is the nation's premier facility designed explicitly to accommodate multidisciplinary nanotechnology research on a college campus.

The 187,000-square-foot nanotechnology center includes a large suite of "clean rooms," where 25,000 square feet of space is devoted solely for labs with movable walls. The clean rooms have special filtration systems to keep the air nearly free of dust particles.

"Several leading U.S. universities have large labs for nanotechnology research, but those were designed mainly for conventional semiconductor processing," Adams said. "Purdue's center stands out because of its nanotech focus, making it better suited for the emerging science."

The center is named for Michael and Katherine (Kay) Birck, of Hinsdale, Ill. The Bircks contributed \$30 million for the building, and Michael is a Purdue alumnus, a member of the Purdue board of trustees and chairman of Naperville, Ill.-based Tellabs Inc.

The Birck Nanotechnology Center also is home to the Network for



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Computational Nanotechnology, which was created in 2003 with a five-year, \$10.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

The major focus of the Network for Computational Nanotechnology is to assemble diverse teams of researchers to create computer simulations that show the entire workings of a design – from its tiniest, nearly atomic-scale basic building blocks, to its largest components, which are visible to the naked eye. Its director is Mark Lundstrom, Purdue's Scifres Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

The NSF and the Semiconductor Industry Association announced in December that the Purdue network will share another \$2 million with four centers to study how to replace conventional electronics with new designs that use nanotechnology. The other four centers are at the University of Virginia, the University of California-Santa Barbara, Columbia University and Harvard University.

Adjacent to the Birck Center is Discovery Park's Bindley Bioscience Center, where one focus of research is on a new discipline called bio-nanotechnology. This research will result in fabricating nanoscale-sensing devices for high-speed detection of food pathogens.

Discovery Park, which is located on the southwestern edge of campus, is Purdue's \$250 million hub for interdisciplinary research and is home to a total of 10 established research centers focusing on everything from biosciences and manufacturing to oncological sciences and health-care engineering.

A Lilly Endowment grant of \$25 million provided support for the Discovery Lecture Series as well as the seed funding for the Energy Center, Center for the Environment, Cyber Center and the Oncological Sciences Center at Discovery Park.

A portion of the Lilly grant has been earmarked as endowed funds to be used in support of Discovery Park's six original interdisciplinary centers, a Discovery Park student research internship program, and a \$1 million endowment for a lecture series to bring prominent speakers to campus. The grant brings Lilly Endowment's total commitment for Discovery Park to more than \$50 million.

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