

# Oregon universities, PNNL sign cooperative research agreement

Oregon's higher education institutions and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory at Hanford are joining forces to improve human health, promote sustainable industrial practices and create high-tech businesses in the Northwest.

In a memorandum of understanding signed in Richland last week, the Oregon university system, Oregon Health and Science University and PNNL agreed to form a cooperative relationship for research and educational activities. Among the areas of initial focus will be two collaborations in life and physical sciences, and one in the economic development arena.

Discussions are under way to create a new program in functional genomics, which will link OHSU's advanced technologies for monitoring gene expression with PNNL's state-of-the-art protein analysis methods. By integrating information obtained with these technologies, researchers will create a unique database that could hold clues to disease prevention. Through the collaboration, advanced computer data mining programs will be developed that allow scientists to examine the information and search for answers to human health and susceptibility issues.

In a second collaborative effort, PNNL and several Oregon research universities with microtechnology and "green chemistry" research programs will collaborate on the development of micro-chemical and -thermal systems in an effort to achieve sustainable processes and products. Microtechnology-based systems are lightweight, compact and efficient and have the potential for revolutionizing heat exchangers, heat pumps, combustors, fuel processors and many other devices. Incorporation of these micro-scale devices will enable industries and communities to thrive economically while protecting their local environments.

The Northwest Virtual Entrepreneurial Support Network will be established to share technology, management, money and marketing resources in Oregon and Washington in an effort to create successful high-tech businesses. The network will identify, develop and commercialize intellectual property derived from the partnership. Partners are PNNL and the Oregon Technology Transfer Council, which comprises the technology transfer officers from Oregon's research universities.

"The Oregon institutions and PNNL have much in common including the mission and desire to advance science and technology through the pursuit of research," said PNNL Director Lura Powell. "This is an important step forward in realizing our vision of PNNL as a partner and accessible resource for the Northwest."

Future collaborations will include educational and training opportunities, staff and faculty development programs, short courses and conferences, and visiting scientist programs in addition to collaborative research and jointly operated research institutes. ♦