

RTP research capabilities, growth potential identified as big advantage for environmental technology advancement

Unique combination of EPA, academia and entrepreneurship cited by Environmental Partnership Summit participants

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. - October 2006 - The impressive research capabilities of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) area laboratories, along with complementary research conducted at North Carolina State University (NC State) and the University of North Carolina (UNC), were cited in the recent Environmental Partnership Summit as important elements for economic growth in the region.

The unique combination of top research universities, a vital entrepreneurial culture, an extensive EPA presence and strong state government support promises to make environmental technology a valuable opportunity for growing the North Carolina economy.

The summit was facilitated in September by the Intellectual Property (IP) Management Group, under a cooperative agreement with the EPA and in conjunction with UNC and NC State. The IP Management Group is part of the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation, based in Fairmont, W.Va.

"Other regions in the country would love to have the resources present at RTP," said Joseph Allen, Vice President and General Manager of the IP Management Group. "Each of the three EPA labs there is producing cutting-edge research that, combined with the outstanding resources of the region's major research universities, will lead to new products to protect the environment and improve the economy."

"This conference was a recognition of the importance of bridging institutions," said Robert McMahan, Ph.D., Senior Science and Technology Advisor to the State of North Carolina and Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology. "We must begin to think differently about the role of universities and research institutions in building regional economies and structure institutional collaborations around them."

The latest in air quality-related research was unveiled by researchers from the EPA's National Risk Management Research Laboratory, the National Exposure Research Laboratory and the National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, and their counterparts at NC State and UNC.

"This event helped facilitate partnerships that will benefit all involved," said Mark Crowell, Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Technology

Transfer, UNC. "The capabilities of these three EPA labs are without question world-class. Combined with UNC and NC State, as well as strong technology industries and active venture capital, we can achieve a common goal of creating new technologies to protect the environment."

University leaders reviewed the economic and technological roles their institutions play regionally and nationally. In addition, they described how strategic partnerships play a critical role in the universities' educational and scientific missions.

David Winwood, Associate Vice Chancellor for Technology Development and Innovation, NC State, said, "The importance of partnerships is more than economic development, or research funding or national statistics. It's about long-lasting standard-of-life improvements. Partnerships among the organizations represented at this summit are ultimately about preserving the way we live and where we live. The summit signified NC State's commitment as an engaged research university to do just that and we came away with some very concrete successes."

High-level representatives of the EPA stressed the importance of university and industry strategic partnerships to the future of the agency's science and technology initiatives.

Also participating in the summit were industry researchers and venture capital representatives interested in partnering with the EPA labs, the universities and local and state leaders to develop the R&D resources into new products.

North Carolina was among the first states in the nation to recognize that knowledge-based economic development creates high-growth companies and well-paying jobs. The state has built an enormous capacity for innovation in science and technology. Today, North Carolina is recognized as having the third largest biotechnology cluster in the world and has recently become known as a leader in the development of nanotechnology as well. The state may now be poised to make similar advances in developing technologies needed to protect the environment.

Over the next few weeks, the summit Web site (www.etprogram.org/summit06) will be updated with post-event information, including presentations, the attendee list, etc.

Those interested in learning more about partnership opportunities discovered at the summit or who have new ideas for collaboration may contact the IP Management Group's Environmental Technologies Program at 866-483-4764 or etprogram@wvhtf.org.

