

Center for Molecular Genetics Building opens

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Media contact: Susan Pollock, 534-3120

CENTER FOR MOLECULAR GENETICS BUILDING OPENS

If the Center for Molecular Genetics building, which will officially open May 7 at the University of California, San Diego has a familiar look to it, there is a good reason.

The new \$7.6 million facility, located on the School of Medicine campus west of the Basic Science Building alongside Gilman Drive, is a mirror image of the Center for Magnetic Recording Research building at UCSD which was dedicated last year.

The new structure was designed by Leonard Veitzer Architect and built by Turnkey Design and Construction, which built both the Center for Molecular Genetics (CMG) and CMRR under one contract.

Funding for the 26,434 assignable square-foot building, with just under 18,000 square feet of lab space, comes from a number of sources, including the W.M. Keck Foundation and UC and UCSD discretionary funds and loans.

The building consists of two basic elements which are essentially identical to those of the Center for Magnetic Recording Research. The first element is a split level executive office wing of approximately 5,000 assignable square feet (asf), including the director's office and conference facilities, a library, and a mini-computer center and related support facilities. The second element is a three-story laboratory building of approximately 21,400 asf, including modular laboratories, laboratory support spaces, offices, equipment storage areas, and related mechanical and electrical rooms and equipment.

The building was constructed of poured-in-place concrete with comb-textured masonry exterior walls, ceramic tile floors in the director's wing, and vinyl flooring in the laboratories. A stepped roof includes clearstory windows to provide constant north light over the lobby area.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has contributed toward the funding of the facility's conference and meeting rooms. Those rooms will be available to the San Diego HHMI program which will be housed in an adjacent building due to start construction this summer.

Although the floor plans and exteriors of the CMG and the CMRR are similar, there are some internal differences.

The corridors inside the CMG have been removed and window walls between offices and laboratories have been created to allow more daylight into the interior and improve visual communication between offices and labs.

Construction of CMG was begun in 1985 and the exterior shell was completed in 1986. Laboratory improvements will be completed in May.

With the opening of the new facility, which is designed to house seven major molecular genetics laboratories, CMG is well on its way to becoming an important community resource -- a place where academic and industry scientists alike can go for information on new developments in molecular genetics, training in the latest techniques of gene manipulation, and access to state-of-the-art equipment.

In addition to laboratories, the CMG facility will contain a world class computer complex for the analysis of genes and proteins that are being isolated on an almost daily basis by scientists all over the world.

The computer center will serve as a gene and protein bank, enabling scientists to make comparisons of the structure and components of different genes and proteins in order to identify those that have potential applications in research and medicine.

CMG also will offer a "pay-as-you-go" gene and protein synthesizing service. Machines operating round the clock will synthesize parts of genes or whole genes on order for scientists desiring genetic probes, or markers, for their investigations.

Research activities in UCSD's biology and chemistry departments and at the School of Medicine, all three nationally recognized for their outstanding scientific programs, thrust the campus into the forefront of research in molecular genetics.

The Center for Molecular Genetics emerged with two primary missions: to promote innovative basic and applied research in molecular genetics across disciplinary lines and to foster a solid working relationship with San Diego's burgeoning biotechnology industry, one of the four largest in the nation.

Some 50 faculty on the general campus and at the medical school are members of the center. The research being conducted in their laboratories ranges from the molecular graphic analysis of protein structure to designing vectors, or carriers, for introducing genes into developing animals as model systems for human gene therapy.

Major subcontractors for the building include Kinney Air Conditioning; Race Electric; Safeway Plumbing and Heating, and Sierra Structures, concrete. Designers include Burkett & Wong, structural engineering; Brown & Vogt, civil engineering; Practicon Associates, mechanical engineering; Semenza Engineering, electrical engineering, and Kawasaki Theilacker & Associates, landscaping.

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