

## **San Diego Dialogue Receives Second Major Grant from Merck to Help Integrate Life Science Regions in California and Mexico**

*UC San Diego Initiative Connects Investors, Scientists and Researchers Across International Borders*

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In an effort to stimulate health and life science research and enterprise between California and Mexico, the global pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc. and its subsidiary Merck, Sharp, & Dohme, have provided additional funding of \$250,000 to San Diego Dialogue, a public policy research initiative at UC San Diego Extension. This brings total funding to \$500,000 over a 2-1/2 year period.

Launched in January of 2007, the mission of the Merck funded initiative is to stimulate innovation through conversation and partnership building on both sides of the border. Activities since then have included executive seminars, roundtables, and regional asset mapping.

"The funding from Merck is being used to build the critical knowledge, relationships and resources that are needed to create viable global partnerships," said Dr. Mary Walshok, co-founder of the San Diego Dialogue and Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs at UC San Diego.

Beyond the border region of Baja California, progress has already been made in sparking discussions about collaboration in four other areas in Mexico: Guadalajara, the capital city of the Mexican state of Jalisco; Cuernavaca, the capital and largest city of the state of Morelos; Irapuato, a municipality located at the foot of the Arandas mountains in the south central region of the Mexican state of Guanajuato; and Monterrey, the capital city of the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo León.

As a result of this initiative, the four regions have come together to form the Mexican Life Sciences Alliance. Members of the Alliance will be at the upcoming 2008 Bio International Convention in San Diego June 17-20, both as exhibitors and to present as a panel on the opportunities for creating business and research partnerships.

"Many international encounters tend to be one-time introductions. This initiative goes beyond networking to help participants acquire specific partnering skills and sensitivities such as identifying realistic criteria for risk and return in global markets, and understanding the business," says Deborah Lazard, Innovation Networks Director for Merck, Sharp, & Dohme.

The partnership with Merck came as a result of the Borderless Innovation report which was published by the San Diego Dialogue in early 2006. One of the recommendations of the report was to expand existing and new cross border education and research linkages. The Dialogue works with Global CONNECT, a fellow UC San Diego Extension organization committed to building international technology-based enterprises.

Mexico also represents a multi-billion dollar market for U.S. pharmaceuticals and biomedical devices. According to the latest data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, trade between the U.S. and Mexico in biotechnology and life sciences goods is on the increase. In 2006, trade in these goods had reached nearly \$3 billion in total trade, and had an average annual growth of 15 percent between 2003 and 2006.

This San Diego Dialogue initiative is designed to build sustainable binational relationships among researchers, scientists and investors for the purposes of stimulating and nurturing the lifecycle of innovation from research to commercialization. It is high priority in Chancellor Marye Anne Fox's efforts to build closer ties between UC San Diego and partners in Mexico, while promoting the university's local impact, national influence and global reach.

"Given that San Diego has the largest concentration of US-based biotechnology firms along the US-Mexico border and one of the largest in the United States, there is a strong case and a unique opportunity to work with the dynamic regions that make up Mexico's emerging life sciences industry," adds Walshok.

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