

La Jolla Institute For Allergy & Immunology, Gemini Science Dedication Marks Opening of First UCSD Science Research Park Facility

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Leslie Franz

The La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology (LIAI) and Gemini Science, Inc. have officially dedicated a new state-of-the art research facility that will further strengthen San Diego's position as a leading hub for biomedical research, particularly in the area of immunology and infectious diseases.

The building is the first facility to open in the University of California, San Diego's (UCSD) new Science Research Park, adjacent to the East Campus Medical Center complex. The 30-acre site has been set aside for research-intensive companies, institutes and agencies interested in creating research and educational linkages with UCSD.

According to UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox, "The UCSD Science Research Park allows us to strengthen creative collaborations that can help bridge the gap between laboratory research and the development of practical applications that benefit society. Gemini Science and the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology are model tenants, bringing strength and expertise in life sciences research that holds great promise for improving human health."

"Today marks a momentous occasion for the advancement of the fight against infectious diseases and cancer, as well as immune system disorders such as allergies, type 1 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis," said Mitchell Kronenberg, Ph.D., President and Scientific Director of LIAI, a nonprofit medical research institute. "This world-class facility provides more space, new labs and cutting-edge equipment that will enable us to intensify our research efforts against debilitating diseases that affect millions of people around the globe."

Kronenberg said the facility's location in the UCSD Science Research Park, adjacent to the UCSD Thornton Hospital, Moores UCSD Cancer Center and Shiley Eye Center, will also advance disease research by encouraging scientific collaboration between Gemini Science, LIAI scientists and UCSD physicians and faculty. "This unique collaboration - involving a nonprofit research institution, a biopharmaceutical company and a renowned medical teaching institution -- holds great promise for speeding the translation of basic research discoveries into treatments and cures for a wide range of human diseases," he said.

The 145,000-square-foot building houses the offices and laboratories of LIAI (www.liai.org), a world leader in immunology research and San Diego's only research institution solely focused on solving immune system diseases, and Gemini Science, a San Diego-based biopharmaceutical research and development company. Gemini is the U.S. subsidiary of Kirin Brewery Co., Ltd., Japan's leading comprehensive beverage group. Gemini Science has provided partial research support and has collaborated with LIAI on various research topics.

"We are very pleased to welcome our new neighbors," said Edward W. Holmes, Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences at UCSD. "The proximity of these stellar research institutions will enhance educational and research opportunities for UCSD graduate and post-graduate trainees, and promote collaboration among our scientists and physicians that will accelerate the translation of discoveries into new diagnostics and therapeutics."

San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders, a featured speaker at the dedication event, said the new facility is another important step for San Diego, one of the nation's three leading biotech clusters and home to more than 500 biomedical companies. "This facility expands San Diego's biotechnology footprint in research on infectious diseases and other immune system disorders," he said. "This is vitally important as the world faces the potential threat of avian flu along with West Nile virus and other dangerous infectious diseases."

Sanders also praised the new facility's location in the UCSD Science Research Park, calling it an intelligent blend of public and private organizations that offers potential medical advancement. "This is a "win-win" for society," he said.

The building will include an Emerging Infectious Disease and Biodefense Center. Launched in 2004, the Center focuses research efforts on the fight against new and re-emerging infectious diseases such as West Nile virus, avian flu, SARS and smallpox. The Center is also home to the world's largest database on how the immune system responds to infectious disease, developed by LIAI in collaboration with the National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases.

LIAI was recently ranked among the top five molecular biology and genetics research organizations in the world, with several major research breakthroughs over the last year, including a combination therapy that may cure type 1 diabetes in the early stages, and a new antibody treatment for smallpox.

Gemini Science also announced major developments during the last year, most significantly a novel, fully human monoclonal antibody to a wide variety of human and avian influenza strains, including the H5N1 avian flu. The finding resulted from a collaboration between LIAI and Gemini. Gemini is initiating preclinical studies of the antibody.

While LIAI maintains its independent finances and identity, officials anticipate substantial day-to-day interaction between Gemini scientists, LIAI researchers and UCSD physicians and scientists. Many of LIAI's scientists are already members of the UCSD faculty.

Koichiro Aramaki, Ph.D., Chairman of Kirin Brewery in Japan, the parent company of Gemini Science, said the close relationship and collaboration with both LIAI and UCSD will be a powerful combination that will fuel the development of innovative medicines. Aramaki also said the new facility marks a proud milestone for the expansion of Kirin's pharmaceutical division into a global company.

Tenants of the UCSD Science Research Park must conduct industrial, scientific and technological activities in various scientific disciplines, including medicine, life sciences and engineering. As part of the lease agreement, tenants agree to participate with UCSD in research and educational programs. Located on the UCSD campus, an internationally respected university recently described by *Newsweek* as one of the "hottest schools for science," Science Research Park tenants have access to UCSD resources and faculty in health sciences, engineering, and biological, physical and marine sciences.

Kazuo Kawamura, Ph.D., President of Gemini Science, said the new location offers a dynamic environment for scientific discourse. "Being part of this immense pool of biomedical talent may enable us to move our findings more quickly into clinical trials and conversely it will allow us to assist LIAI and the University to translate their discoveries into the next stage of development. The combination of our unique technology to produce 100% human antibodies in animals and LIAI and UCSD's findings will be a powerful tool to develop new medicines and therapies. We truly have a huge opportunity to make advances in human health."

Founded in 1988, the Institute's research staff includes more than 100 Ph.D. scientists who focus on four major research areas: autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes; cancer and stimulating immune responses against tumors; allergy and asthma; and infectious diseases such as those caused by the smallpox and West Nile viruses.

Located on 3.42 acres, the new building encompasses four levels and features a three-story atrium with overhanging balconies and a 157-seat auditorium. The building's "open laboratory" floor plan is designed for LIAI's highly collaborative research environment and includes specialized rooms for all aspects of molecular and cellular biology.

"By equipping LIAI researchers with the latest research technology, in a location that invites some of the brightest minds in science to work together, we have the potential to push forward medical research at an unprecedented rate," Kronenberg said. "We believe this building will be an important address in cutting-edge science."

Media Contacts: Leslie Franz, (619) 543-6163 Bonnie Ward, (619) 303-3160