Penn State Receives $5 Million NSF Grant For Nanotech Applications and Career Knowledge Center

University Park, Pa. -- Penn State will receive $5 million over four years from the National Science Foundation to establish a National Center for Nanotechnology Applications and Career Knowledge (NACK).

Penn State has been a national leader in nanotechnology education and workforce development since 1998. From 2001 to 2008, Penn State was home to the NSF Regional Center for Nanofabrication Manufacturing Education. The new NSF grant establishes the National Center for Nanotechnology Applications and Career Knowledge (NACK) as successor to the Regional Center.

According to Stephen Fonash, the Kunkle Chair Professor of Engineering Science, who will direct the new NACK Center, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development was extremely farsighted when it created the Nanofabrication Manufacturing Technology (NMT) Partnership in 1998 to meet Pennsylvania industry needs for skilled micro- and nanofabrication workers.

"The NMT Partnership prepares students to work in any industry using micro- and nanotechnology," said Fonash. "In addition to Penn State, the NMT Partnership includes the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, the Pennsylvania College of Technology, other post-secondary and secondary schools, private industry and others."

The nation's first associate degrees in nanofabrication were awarded in Pennsylvania through this partnership. The NMT Partnership also offers enormously popular summer Nanotech Academies for high school students, as well as professional development workshops for educators and industry personnel.

The goal of the NACK Center is to provide national coordination of micro- and nanofabrication workforce development programs and activities on behalf of NSF.

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The center will assist educational institutions and industry across the nation to work together to develop and deliver micro- and nanotechnology education programs, including incumbent worker training programs. The center will also help to develop national education program accreditation and worker skill standards in micro-and nanotechnology.

"There is tremendous interest within industry and educational institutions in finding ways to meet the growing need for workers with micro- and nanotechnology skills," says Fonash. "The NACK Center is already working with several hundred community colleges and other educational institutions in more than 20 states and Puerto Rico to help develop programs to meet this need."

In addition to Penn State, other key partners in the NACK Center are the Dakota County Technical College in Minnesota, the Maricopa Community Colleges in Arizona, and the University of Puerto Rico, Humacao.

For further information, please contact the NACK Center at 814-865-9635 or visit nano4me.org.

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