

**For Immediate Release**

**AURP ANNOUNCES 21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS  
AT THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN OKLAHOMA CITY**

*Western Research Parks Recognized with 2016 Outstanding Research Park Award*

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, September 29, 2016** – The Association of University Research Parks (AURP), a professional association of university related research and science parks, announced today the winners of its 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Awards of Excellence, which were presented during an awards luncheon held at the association’s 2016 International Conference in Oklahoma City. Award categories included: the Outstanding Research Park Award, Emerging Research Park Award, Innovation Awards, Career Achievement Award, and the Leadership Award.

The **Outstanding Research Park Award** recognizes university research parks and their leadership and encourages continuous evaluation and development of best practices for the research park community. This year’s prestigious award in this category went to **Western Research Parks**, part of Western University located at London, Ontario in Canada. The community of three research park campuses includes the original park now named Western Discovery Park Advanced Manufacturing Park and the Sarnia-Lambton Research Park.

“Western is extremely proud to be the first research park in Ontario to receive this recognition,” said University of Western Ontario President Amit Chakma. “Not only are we creating a world-class research culture at Western, but we’re doing so in conjunction with our community to bring both economic and societal benefits locally, nationally and internationally.”

The parks serve as a major showcase of Western University’s commitment to both research, with the Bowman Centre, Canada’s largest clean-tech incubator, focused on large-scale industrial technology—as well as economic development and engagement within the region, with an estimated \$125 million contributed back to the local community.

“This is a fitting recognition for our research parks, which have played a significant role in fortifying relationships between academics and the business community for nearly 30 years,” said Western’s Vice President Research John Capone. “We’re proud of the companies the parks have attracted, strengthened and retained in our region—allowing us to become a key contributor to southwestern Ontario’s business ecosystem.”

**Other individuals and organizations recognized at the 2016 Awards of Excellence event include:**

**Emerging Research Park Award:** This year's Emerging Research Park Award was presented to the **University of Wollongong Innovation Campus** in Australia. This award recognizes parks that have been in operation less than ten years, which excel in bringing technology from the laboratory to economically viable business activities.

Since opening its doors in 2008, the University of Wollongong Innovation Campus has grown to generate over \$2 billion in economic activity and employ over 1,500 individuals. Some of the programs that have been at the core of the Innovation Campus's success have pioneered technological and research breakthroughs. In addition to these breakthroughs, the campus has established inclusionary social standards and programs, such as the multi-faceted iAccelerate incubator, which focuses on sustainable business growth and holds a rate of approximately half of its graduates having at least one female co-founder.

**Vision Award:** The Vision Award is given to an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to the AURP community, and to the innovation community as a whole. This year's Vision Award winner was **Eileen Walker**, MIM/MBA, the former Chief Executive Officer at AURP. Ms. Walker joined AURP as a consultant for a management company due to her extensive experience as a research park director at the Arizona State University Research Park, which AURP used at that time. Her leadership was quickly identified as a necessity, and the association hired her. During her eight years of leadership, she contributed to the growth of the AURP community—helping to drive the vision, collaboration, and idea sharing that has become a staple of AURP and its conferences.

"Eileen excelled at bringing together the brightest minds to focus on a common agenda: the growth and creation of communities of innovation," said AURP President Charles D'Agostino, MBA. "She is very deserving of this award, and we applaud her for her countless contributions to AURP."

**Career Achievement Award:** This year's AURP Career Achievement Award winner was **David Baker**, current Vice President of External Affairs at the Illinois Institute of Technology, who formerly served as Executive Director of the Institute's Innovation Technology Park and as former AURP President. The AURP Career Achievement Award recognizes an individual who has made research parks a central focus of their career, who has achieved success with a park over a substantial period of time, and who has advanced understanding of university research parks. Mr. Baker was the first executive director for the Innovation Technology Park. During his leadership of the park, he enabled the its tenants to capture over \$317 million in federal, state and private funding.

**Leadership Award:** The Leadership Award is given in recognition of a business, university or governmental leader who has made an outstanding contribution to the success and total community impact of a university research and technology park. This year's recipient was **Dennis Kekas**, the Associate Vice-Chancellor at Centennial Campus, North Carolina State University. Mr. Kekas has been a pivotal leader in attracting dozens of companies who develop partnerships with the University's faculty and students. Since 2006, employment at the park has nearly skyrocketed from 1,800 to 3,200 employees, despite a recession-slowed economy. He has also been a major player in garnering some of the largest contracts and research awards in the history of Centennial Campus and NC State, including: Eastman Chemical (\$10 million); the Department of Defense's Laboratory for Analytical Science, or LAS (\$65 million); and the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation grant from the Department of Energy (\$146 million consortium and the largest in the university's history).

**Innovation Awards:** The AURP Innovation Award recognizes university research park companies that have produced substantial and meaningful products or services. This year, the voting was so close that two organizations were recognized: one for their service in a special needs community and another for an innovative research technology solving worldwide challenges.

**NOMADD of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology** is the first winner of the 2016 Innovation Award for its novel research technology. NOMADD, from the company FalconViz, is a device that stands for "NO water Mechanical Automated Dusting Device." The device has eight patents pending that relate to its unique mechanical actions. Using only three moving parts, it can remove up to 99.6 percent of dust with a cost effective daily clean.

**The Emerge Center at the Louisiana State University Innovation Park** is the second winner of the 2016 Innovation Award for its service in a special needs community. It is a therapy and audiology service center that opened its doors more than 50 years ago. The Center offers resources, tools and coaching to help children in Louisiana reach their optimum levels of independent communication, school readiness and social interaction. It utilizes research-based best practices, leading technology and highly trained professionals, working together as a team to offer programming and treatment options to children challenged with oftentimes multiple diagnoses. In 2015 alone, the Emerge Center worked with more than 1,100 children with varying developmental challenges, and has been able to make these specialized services more accessible to some of the most underserved populations in the state.

**Appreciation Award:** The Appreciation Award is offered periodically when a qualifying candidate is considered to deserve "special accolades" from the AURP community. This year's Appreciation Award went to **Steve Hanssen**, who recently retired from his role as Director of Development for Wexford Science & Technology in Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Hanssen has been involved with nine research parks including: The University City Science Center in Philadelphia; University of Maryland BioPark in Baltimore; Hershey Center for Applied Research; University Technology Park at IIT in Chicago; Wake Forest



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Innovation Center in Winston-Salem; BRDG Park at the Danforth Plant Science Center and CORTEX-both in Saint Louis; The Innovation Research Park at Old Dominion University in Norfolk; and the University of Miami Life Science and Technology Research Park. He has also been a regular speaker and panelist at AURP events, and was the tour host for BioParks 2010. Mr. Hanssen's research park experience spans more than 20 years, and he has given of his time and talents to serve both AURP and the industry as a whole.

"We are very proud of our 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Awards of Excellence winners this year," said AURP President and Executive Director of the LSU Innovation Park and Louisiana Business & Technology Center Charles D'Agostino, MBA. "The depth and breadth of our winners demonstrate the caliber of parks and talent that makes up our incredible association."

***About the Association of University Research Parks (AURP)***

*The Association of University Research Parks is a professional association of university related research and science parks. AURP's mission is to foster innovation, commercialization and economic growth through university, industry and government partnerships. For more information, visit AURP's web site at [www.aurp.net](http://www.aurp.net).*

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