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OCAST announces state's first nanotechnology applications award winners

Five small Oklahoma businesses that will improve their competitive position through nanotechnology are recipients of nearly \$1.25 million in OCAST's first Oklahoma Nanotechnology Applications Project (ONAP) award. The awards were made this week by the OCAST governing board.

OCAST, the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology, contracted with the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence and the Oklahoma Technology Commercialization Center, managed by i2E Inc., to help implement the new program. The program provides a mechanism to extend financial support and technical services for the application of nanotechnology in Oklahoma's manufacturing and business community.

Michael Carolina, executive director of OCAST, said, "The emerging field of nanotechnology is globally recognized as a transformational (disruptive) technology and the third great megatrend that will have a profound impact on all aspects of life. Our goal is to establish Oklahoma as a key player in nanotechnology and create an environment conducive to the rapid development and commercialization of nanotechnology."

ONAP was created by the Oklahoma Legislature last session to initiate a statewide project to accomplish the following:

1. Provide funding and technical support for the application of nanotechnology, and to assist later stage development of nanotechnology
2. Provide education about nanotechnology to the state's economic development network, researchers, manufacturers and businesses
3. Sustain the Oklahoma Nanotechnology Initiative (ONI) begun in 2005. OCAST contracted with The State Chamber of Oklahoma to operate ONI which provides a focus on the promotion and support of business, academic, manufacturing, employment and investment initiatives related to nanotechnology and coordinates activities on a regional basis for the benefit of Oklahoma

In keeping with OCAST's traditional method of competitive peer review, this week's awards were chosen based on the greatest likelihood for commercial success.

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Board Nanotech Awards – OCAST ADD 1

Additional ONAP funding is available through OCAST's Oklahoma Applied Research Support program specifically targeted to later stage development of nanotechnology. Those dollars are expected to be awarded through competitive peer review before the end of June.

Winning nanotechnology awards include:

SouthWest NanoTechnology (SWeNT), of Norman, manufactures high quality carbon nanotubes. With new OCAST funding and new manufacturing techniques developed at OU, SWeNT plans to diversify its manufacturing processes and mass produce a "commercial grade" of carbon nanotubes at a substantially lower price than is currently possible. Production volumes will increase more than 30 fold while costs are expected to fall by 90 percent. (\$430,000)

XetaComp Nanotechnologies, of Edmond, in conjunction with an equipment manufacturer has developed a proprietary manufacturing process to produce titanium dioxide nanoparticles (n-TiO₂). XetaComp is developing the technology with the goal of lowering costs. XetaComp plans to manufacture the n-TiO₂ in their Lawton facility and use it in sunscreens, both in a direct branded lotion and as a wholesale product to national sunscreen brands. (\$250,000)

Rupture Pin Technology is an Oklahoma City based manufacturer with \$5 million in current sales and growth reaching 60 percent per year. Pressure relief valves they make are limited to lower pressure applications because O-ring seal tends to fail at high pressures. The company will research adding carbon nanotubes to the elastomers used to manufacture the O-ring for improved strength. If successful, the valves could be marketed to higher pressure applications dramatically increasing the product's market size. (\$150,000)

Access Optics, in Broken Arrow, manufacturers and assembles components and complete sub-assemblies for medical related endoscopic equipment. This is done using small particles of ceramic or metal to form a seal between the lens and metal encasement. During normal use, the product is subjected to extensive autoclave cleanings and therefore significant "wear" occurs on the seals. The company will use nanoparticles to improve the glass to metal seal for the lens. \$(165,000)

Martin Bionics, of Oklahoma City a relatively new company, focuses on "state of the art" research in the field of prosthetics and the commercialization of new prosthetics innovations. Their research is focused on a nanoparticle platform technology capable of producing multiple products for amputees. Such applications include development of a superhydrophobic nanoparticle powder the amputee can spray onto existing liners to repel perspiration and incorporating the nanopowder into the actual liner in order to permanently provide a liquids repelling barrier. (\$250,000)

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