

Nanotechnology center established in Mississippi

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The University of Southern Mississippi (Hattiesburg, Miss.) has announced a collaborative effort between state and local entities and the federal government that has culminated in nanotechnology-based industrial park.

Driven by a vision of cultural innovation and a track record of success that has already attracted one of southern California's top nanotechnology companies and a \$25 million commitment from another, The Garden, the University of Southern Mississippi's innovation and commercialization park, recently opened in Hattiesburg.

With more than \$30 million invested so far, The Garden, a 521-acre development at the former site of the university's golf course, will be home to the \$27 million National Formulation Science Laboratory, the Mississippi Polymer Institute and a host of other organizations that will work together with the university and the region's Area Development Partnership to move innovation from the mind to the marketplace.

"This kind of development is unique in the country. I don't know of anywhere else where they have everything in place like we do," said Dr. Shelby Thames, a polymer scientist and distinguished university research professor at Southern Miss and The Garden's original visionary. "What we've created allows a company, an individual entrepreneur, university researcher, staff member or even students to go full circle from the formulation of an idea in a lab to the creation of a viable and marketable commercial product. It is a virtual one-stop-shop for entrepreneurs."

Before the facility opened, the USM Research Foundation announced a \$25 million dollar commitment by Viridis Development Co. to build a state-of-the-art office and research building that will offer 100,000 sq ft of space for companies wishing to affiliate with The Garden.

Much of that research and product development stems from the School of Polymers and High Performance Materials at Southern Miss which has garnered an international reputation for excellence. And their success creating large molecules, plastics and fibers to do specific jobs they haven't done before hasn't gone unnoticed by some of the nation's largest companies, including Northrop Grumman, Siemens, General Electric and U.S. Marine. The school has even attracted Boeing, which is placing \$500,000 worth of equipment in the NFSL to aid the study of composites for use in construction of lightweight aircraft.

The National Formulation Science Laboratory -- a 60,000 sq-ft building that will house the Formulation Lab -- will allow researchers to conduct hundreds of experiments simultaneously, a high-bay pilot facility that will allow for scale-up and prototyping, and a business incubator providing laboratory and office environments.

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