

Research / Discovery

CSU, East China Normal University create Joint Research Institute for New Energy and the Environment

June 13, 2011

Colorado State University and East China Normal University in Shanghai on Friday announced a Joint Research Institute for New Energy and the Environment that will capitalize on strengths of the two institutions to develop new energy solutions and help deal with the impact of energy on climate, air quality, land use and water resources.

East China Normal University is one of Colorado State's strategic partners in China with collaboration on student exchange programs and research initiatives in everything from music to clean energy.

Part of CSU's service mission

"The partnerships we are pursuing with East China Normal University and other Chinese universities are built around common faculty research interests and shared global concerns - and are very much in keeping with the service mission of a land-grant university like CSU," said Colorado State President Tony Frank. "Together, we are building an international alliance of scholars and scientists that is able to work across borders on some of the most pressing challenges facing our world today. Ultimately, this type of collaboration will benefit all nations and all people."

"Finding solutions to some of the world's most chronic, challenging problems in global sustainability requires partnerships beyond the laboratories and classrooms at Colorado State," said Bill Farland, vice president for Research.

"We must reach out to our strategic partners around the globe who share our expertise to carry out research for the benefit of our societies," Farland said. "For example, ECNU mirrors our strength in several areas of energy and environmental research, including photovoltaics and scalable modeling of environmental issues. This collaboration could lead to important advances in science and technology in these areas."

Agreement signed in Shanghai Friday

Frank signed the agreement with Lizhong Yu, president of East China Normal University, in Shanghai on Friday. Joining Frank and Farland on the trip from Colorado State:

- Jim Cooney, vice provost for International Affairs;
- Jim Sites, associate dean for Research in the College of Natural Sciences;
- Jan Leach, University Distinguished Professor in the College of Agricultural Sciences;
- Wei Gao, professor of Forest, Rangeland and Water Stewardship and director of China Initiatives;
- John Moore, director of the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory; and



Lizhong Yu, president of ECNU with Bing Li of SAFEA and CSU President Tony Frank

Inside This Edition

CSU, East China Normal University create Joint Research Institute for New Energy and the Environment

Engineering, biochemistry professors named 2011 Boettcher Investigators

CSU College of Business faculty rank third nationally in entrepreneurship research

CSU to host 100 Native American students from across the country at College Horizons June 12-17

Professor shapes space-based technology in agriculture

New executive director and chief human resource officer

The wonderful world of woody plants June 21

Preview welcomes first year students



- Bryan Willson, founder of CSU's Engines and Energy Conversion Laboratory.

Co-directors of the new Institute are Junhao Chu of ECNU and Willson of CSU; executive director of the Institute is Wei Gao of CSU. Farland is co-chair of the JRI Advisory Committee, made up of CSU, ECNU and China's State Administration for Foreign Expert Affairs, or SAFEA, a group that met for the first time Thursday.

The joint institute will focus on science, technology, policy and education related to energy and the environment, said Willson, who also serves as director of Colorado State's Clean Energy Supercluster. About 150 faculty members at the university research various aspects of clean and renewable energy, with an even larger number working in the environmental field.

"On Thursday, the Chinese State Administration for Foreign Expert Affairs indicated that this new partnership is so important that they will consider not only supporting the exchange of Chinese and U.S. faculty but they will also consider providing support for joint international projects between the universities," Cooney said. "SAFEA is designating the ECNU-CSU Joint Research Institute as a 'special support sponsorship,' and SAFEA will work with the Institute to identify funding for international research projects."

Focus on energy and the environment

"Whether it is as competitors or collaborators, it is vitally important that our students and faculty understand what China means to this industry and what major changes are going to occur over the next decade," said Willson, who is a frequent visitor to China as part of his ongoing research and outreach for university spinoffs generated from his laboratory. "We will work with ECNU to develop new energy solutions, but we can't really talk about energy without also considering the impact on the environment – particularly on climate, air quality, land use and water resources."

As part of its strategic plan, Colorado State is committed to growing areas of study that address global challenges and creating international partnerships to face those challenges. The university has sought like-minded institutions that share its vision and values for higher education in areas such as China, India, Mexico and Russia.

Colorado State has key strategic partners across China, Cooney said. In addition to East China Normal, those partners include Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University, Hunan University, China Agricultural University and Beijing Normal University.

In September, Colorado State's Office of International Programs hosted an International Colloquium on China to showcase some of the university's partnerships and research programs that directly address the challenges and opportunities facing China.

Last week, the university announced a new long-term agreement with Coca-Cola, which is expected to offer some new opportunities for additional research partnerships in China. The company has agreed to help facilitate faculty and student exchanges with Chinese universities in the areas of water resources, energy and environmental sustainability.



Chinese and CSU delegations at Friday's ceremony in Shanghai

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