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On the cover: Veterinary Medicine Open House.

Photo by Tom Schaeffges.

# Translating Basic Science into Human and Animal Health Benefits

By Herb Whiteley

Have you ever realized you were at the start of something really big? Have you felt the excitement of knowing that an idea will evolve, through teamwork and hard work, into a reality that will change lives?

On May 12, I had that feeling. Nearly 100 research leaders from the Urbana campus—including a dozen from our College—were gathered in an auditorium in the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, the epitome of basic scientific discovery. We were there to talk about a campus initiative on biomedical translational research. The goal of translational research is to “translate” fundamental research discoveries into activities or resources with potential for life-changing advances in human and animal health and society.

The National Institutes of Health has identified translational research as an area that holds major opportunities for advancing medicine in this century. The Urbana campus has targeted it as an area in which to build national competitiveness. In his remarks on May 12, Acting Provost Jesse Delia called this initiative on biomedical translational research “the most important the campus has undertaken in the past 30 years.”


It is one our College is uniquely positioned to lead. Our teaching hospital provides the Urbana campus with its only full-service medical facility. Our faculty have comprehensive training and expertise in cross-species comparative medicine. They are able to conduct biomedical investigations at the molecular and genetic level, and to effectively manipulate experimental animal populations and create biological models to predict responses to infectious, toxic, nutritional, or other disease processes.

Our clinical medicine faculty are clinician scientists who can lead these projects as well as partner with others in developing and testing hypotheses for biomedical applications of basic science discoveries. We have outstanding faculty researchers who are already making medical advances in oncology, cardiology, orthopedic biology, infectious disease, and other areas.

The campus initiative, by fostering collaborative, interdisciplinary work, will greatly amplify the visibility and effectiveness of our faculty.

Over the past academic year, the Campus Translational Research Advisory Committee, which I chair, has explored faculty interest in therapeutic agents and delivery systems, host-microbe interactions, bio imaging, stem cell biology, applied social sciences, devices and sensing, medical informatics, and more. The gathering of researchers on May 12, which sought input to determine the campus strategy for investing in translational research, was the culmination of the committee's efforts.

It was only the beginning. But it was the beginning of something very big.

To find out more, please visit the Web site for the campus committee at <http://www.research.uiuc.edu/translational/>. As this exciting initiative unfolds, I will share more with you. I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas. You may contact me at [dean@cvm.uiuc.edu](mailto:dean@cvm.uiuc.edu). 



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