

News

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Bioengineering Center officially opens

The Center for Bioengineering and Computational Biology made its official debut during a ceremony Thursday in Butterfield Hall. Professor Leo J. Fleishman, chairman of the biology department, cut the ceremonial ribbon to mark the long-awaited opening.

Fleishman was instrumental in securing the grant of \$1.5 million from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

President Stephen C. Ainlay voiced his "appreciation for the splendid research and state-of-the-art facilities that the Hughes and Mellon Foundation funding made possible.

"Institutions are known by what they build and don't build," Ainlay said in thanking those who played a role in the Center's creation.

"The Hughes funding went toward renovating two floors of Butterfield Hall for the Center, hiring two new faculty, the purchase of equipment and funding student and faculty research," said Steven K. Rice, associate professor of Biology and co-chair of the center. "The Mellon Foundation funding was essential at the curriculum development level."

Fleishman's vision for the center evolved from a report from the National Research Council entitled "Biology 2010."

"Scientists are relying more and more on qualitative and analytical work making the interdisciplinary courses essential to students in the biological sciences as well as engineering and computer science," said Fleishman. "The command center for the integration of the cross-disciplinary coursework is the Center for Bioengineering and Computational Biology."

The center has been in use for about a year. Students conduct research on machines like the 858 Mini Bionix, which allows them to calculate the force used to break wood, bone and other substances; cycle an object to determine the wear-resistance and point at which the object breaks down; and even compare the anatomy of a type of wood to its structural properties.

Two cross-disciplinary courses have been developed to date, including "Intro to Bioengineering" and "Bioinformatics." The goal is to establish a full-fledged bioengineering major with students from the departments of Biology, Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering and Computer and Electrical Engineering.

"Union is small enough," Fleishman continued, "for faculty and students to work together closely in a broad educational curriculum – not on the narrow edges of the disciplines.

"The next step is to expand our Virtual Bioengineering Center to extend the reach of our research beyond the campus to the world."

This story was featured in The Chronicle on February 8, 2007



Ribbon cutting at Butterfield Hall: [Enlarge](#)
 From left are President Stephen C. Ainlay; Steven Vogel, professor at Duke University; Leo J. Fleishman, professor and chair of Biology; Andrew J. Rapoff, assistant professor of Mechanical Engineering and co-chair of the center, and Steven K. Rice, associate professor of Biology and center co-chair.



It's grand: [Enlarge](#)
 Faculty, students and staff gather for the ceremonies.