UCD CSCB Building Opening

Over 300 guests attended the opening ceremony of the UCD Centre for Synthesis and Chemical Biology building on Thursday, February 2.

The UCD building, where researchers and administrative and academic staff have worked since August 2005, was officially opened by An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, TD.

The attendees, including representatives from industry, academia and the CSCB’s funding bodies as well as a number of UCD Chemistry graduates, were given tours of the state-of-the-art building before the opening ceremony. Professor Pat Guiry brought the Taoiseach and Dr Hugh Brady, UCD President, on a tour of the building.

In the Taoiseach's opening speech he congratulated everyone involved in the establishment of the CSCB and stressed the importance of the collaborative approach to research. "With the Centre drawing on some 40 researchers from UCD, the RCSI and TCD, it is clear that you are developing the widest possible pool of knowledge and expertise from which to draw." He also vowed that the government was "committed to supporting that quality and ensuring that research and development continue to be at the heart of our economic development over the coming years". After his speech, the Taoiseach unveiled a plaque and guests then attended a reception in the O'Reilly Hall.

The CSCB Report 2002-2005 was published in January and over 600 copies were distributed.

Recent Advances in Synthesis and Chemical Biology IV

The 4th annual Centre for Synthesis and Chemical Biology (CSCB) symposium was held in the Astra Hall in UCD on December 2, 2005.

The six guest speakers covered a broad range of chemical biology and organic synthesis topics, including synthesis, enzymology, structural biology and glycoscience. A report of this meeting by Drs Paul Murphy and Peter Rutledge has been published in Nature Chemical Biology.


Research Highlights

**RCSI News**

The work resulting from the collaboration between Dr Marc Devocelle, Professors Kevin Nolan (CSCB, RCSI) and Desmond Fitzgerald (Conway Institute), published in *Organic & Biomolecular Chemistry*, has been selected for inclusion in the RSC’s Chemical Biology Virtual Journal. This article describes the development of novel inhibitors of the enzyme prostaglandin H2 synthase, which, unlike aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) inhibit both catalytic sites of this bifunctional enzyme and could therefore provide superior therapeutic profiles over classical NSAIDs.
TCD News

Work on naked-eye colorimetric sensors by Dr Paul Kruger and Professor Thorfinnur Gunnlaugsson at TCD has been described as “a big step forward in the development of chemo sensors that work in real-world applications” in a recent article in Chemical & Engineering News.

The sensors could potentially be used like litmus paper to check domestic water quality and for environmental and other applications.


UCD News

Dr Kevin O’Connor’s research on biodegradable plastics has attracted much media attention recently. The work involves the pyrolysis of polystyrene into styrene, followed by the bacterial conversion of styrene to polyhydroxalkanoate (PHA) by Pseudomonas putida CA-3. PHA is a biodegradable heat-resistant plastic that can be used in a variety of forms ranging from plastic bottles to surgical parts. Dr O’Connor was interviewed on the RTE 6-1 News on March 9 and articles on this research were published in Scientific America, the New York Times, the Irish Independent, the Irish Times, and on LiveScience on MSN.


Outreach and Education

Transition Year Students Visit

On January 24, 15 transition year students from 15 different schools attended a half-day workshop at the CSCB as part of the UCD Conway Institute’s Outreach programme. The young visitors enjoyed a programme of building tours, hands-on laboratory sessions, career talks and demonstrations of the new technologies.

Plans are now underway for the visit of a further 15 second-level students to the centre on April 25, as part of UCD’s New ERA programme. In addition, taster talks on chemistry and chemical biology for 180 students are planned for June in conjunction with UCD New ERA.

Open Days

During UCD’s Open Days on March 15 and 16, a total of 125 students were given tours of the CSCB building and participated in laboratory demonstrations. It is intended to expand the outreach and education initiative, which is now called Science®CSCB, to TCD and the RCSI.