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Easson named director of 125,000 s/f WPI Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center at Gateway Park

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David Easson, a 20-year veteran of the biotechnology industry, has been named director of the WPI Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center (LSBC) at Gateway Park. Easson will manage the operations of the 125,000 s/f building, which houses WPI's graduate research programs in the life sciences and several life sciences-related companies, and will build awareness and support for the center and its core research, analytical, and bioprocessing facilities, which are available on a contract basis to other organizations.

"I am excited at the prospect of bringing the benefit of my corporate experience to the management and operation of this innovative center," Easson said, "and also building on the contacts and relationships I've built in the business world to enhance the operation and expand the influence of this facility. I'm especially looking forward to working with the energetic faculty and students who are doing fascinating and important work here; I hope I can add value to their efforts and to WPI's investment in the life sciences."

As director of the LSBC, Easson will manage the day-to-day operations of the building, which houses a broad array of research and development programs in such areas as regenerative biology, tissue mechanics and engineering, bioengineering and biosensors, biochemistry and nanotechnology, neuroimaging, and neuroprosthetics. He will also manage and market the building's core research and development facilities, which may be used on a contract basis by companies and other research laboratories. These include a microscopy and imaging core that includes a scanning confocal microscope and a major instrumentation core that contains research-grade analytical instruments. The building also houses the Bioprocess Center, which helps corporate partners design and scale up biomanufacturing processes. "I think there is a real market for these capabilities," he said.

Easson said he will also seek to increase awareness of the LSBC and the quality of the research it hosts. With the goal of helping to increase funding for WPI researchers, forge new research partnerships with companies and other research institutions, and translate discoveries emerging from WPI's life sciences research labs into commercial ventures. "The highly interdisciplinary and highly applied nature of the research under way in the LSBC makes this a distinctive research center, one that has a lot to offer the life sciences research community and the region's life sciences and biomedical industries," he said.

Before joining WPI, Easson was director of the BioProcess Division of IMPACT Technology Development, a contract development organization in Lincoln and Devens, Mass. Previously, he co-founded Cadrus Therapeutics, a start-up company in Worcester developing a novel drug delivery technology. From 2000 to 2008, he was vice president for manufacturing and process development for Epic Therapeutics Inc., a private drug delivery company that was acquired by Baxter Healthcare

Corp. He has also served as general manager of Collaborative BioAlliance, a biotech manufacturing facility in Smithfield, R.I., and was co-founder, executive vice president, and chief operating officer of Alpha-Beta Technology Inc. in Worcester, a public company involved in the development and manufacturing of yeast-derived biopharmaceuticals. Under his leadership, Alpha-Beta raised \$200 million, grew to 180 employees, and attained a market capitalization of \$350 million.

Easson, who earned a BS in chemical engineering at the University of South Carolina and a ScD in biochemical engineering at MIT, has served on the boards of the UMass Memorial Foundation, the Worcester Business Development Corporation, and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) Bay State Chapter. He has also been a member of the JDRF International research grant review committee. In 1993 he was a finalist for Ernst & Young's New England Region Entrepreneur of the Year Award. He has received the Mary Ann Kugel award from JDRF and the Baxter Outstanding Technical Achievement Award.

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