



Creating Communities of
Innovation[™]

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARKS

35 Years Advancing Innovation & Economic Growth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AURP Presents 25th Annual Awards of Excellence at 2021 International Conference

*Oklahoma City Innovation District is named AURP's 2021
"Outstanding Research Park / Innovation District"*

Tucson, AZ, October 28, 2021 – The Association of University Research Parks (AURP), a 35-year global nonprofit membership organization serving research park communities and innovation districts, presented its 2021 Awards of Excellence honorees last week at AURP's 2021 International Conference held in-person and virtual at the University of Utah Research Park, October 18-21.

"On behalf of the AURP membership, we are delighted and proud to announce our 2021 Awards of Excellence honorees," said Leah Burton, AURP President and Director, Centennial Campus Partnership Office at North Carolina State University. "This year's awards recipients have truly distinguished themselves in building and leading our communities of innovation."

AURP's International Conference annually brings together more than 200 research park and innovation district leaders from around the world for high-impact knowledge exchange and networking with the industry's premier experts and leaders.

"Congratulations to all of our 2021 Awards of Excellence honorees," said AURP CEO Brian Darmody. "Each of these high-impact individuals and the organizations they represent are truly deserving of AURP recognition. We're delighted to honor their energy, devotion and commitment to advancing the mission of growing innovation and technology communities in the US and worldwide."

The **Outstanding Research Park / Innovation District Award** recognizes research parks and innovation districts and their leadership for their achievements and encourages continuous evaluation and development of best practices for the research park community.

The **2021 Outstanding Innovation District Award honoree is the Oklahoma City Innovation District**: The Oklahoma City Innovation District, founded in 2019, is a 1.3 square mile ecosystem of collaboration, innovation and economic growth located in Northeast Oklahoma City. The Oklahoma City Innovation District focuses on a diverse array of industry sectors, including healthcare, bioscience, aerospace and unmanned systems, specialized manufacturing, academia, technology and energy. The Oklahoma City Innovation District brings together resources, programming and state-of-the-art facilities to facilitate cross-industry collaboration through the convergence of scientists, researchers, academics and industry experts.

"Oklahoma City is very proud of this award and excited for the continuing development of our Innovation District," said Mayor David Holt, City of Oklahoma City. "Our voters recently made a major financial commitment

to the Innovation District through our MAPS 4 initiative, investments that will serve as a catalyst not just for growth, but for equitable and inclusive growth. By any objective standard, Oklahoma City is booming right now, but to maintain that momentum we have to stay on the cutting edge, and this Innovation District ensures that we will. I am proud of this award, but I know that we are just getting started.”

Other individuals and organizations recognized at the 2021 Awards of Excellence event include:

Emerging Research Park Award – VanCamp Incubator, Michigan State University Foundation: This award recognizes parks that have been in operation less than ten years, which excel in bringing technology from the laboratory to economically viable business activities.

The VanCamp Incubator is a new 22K sq. ft. corporate and academic research incubator named for Loretta VanCamp, an MSU biochemist who was part of the team that made a discovery that led to the creation of a leading anti-cancer drug. The VanCamp Incubator is a multi-tenant facility, open to emerging companies and researcher groups across the Greater Lansing region. Jeff Smith, Director of Real Estate at MSU Foundation, accepted this award at AURP’s event.

AURP Innovation Award – IonQ (based at the University of Maryland Discovery District): The Innovation Award is given each year to the business or nonprofit institution located in a research park that has brought forward one or more proprietary products, process or services which represent a substantial technology breakthrough or have the potential for a significant positive impact on the economic, health or welfare status of a broad spectrum of humanity.

IonQ, whose President & CEO, Peter Chapman accepted this award at AURP’s Awards event, is a leader in quantum computing. IonQ’s next-generation quantum computer is the world’s most powerful trapped-ion quantum computer.

"The world's most complex problems require the world's most innovative solutions – and that's what we set out to create with IonQ," said Chapman. "We're honored to receive the Innovation Award as it marks another exciting milestone for our quantum community. We're creating tangible solutions to challenges that matter, and we're just getting started."

Appreciation Award – This Award is given as recognition to an individual who, through the course of his or her career, has made a significant contribution to the advancement and recognition of the industry.

Joe Meredith, former President and Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC): Meredith, a former AURP Board Member, served as VTCRC President and CEO from 1993 to 2020 of the internationally renowned research park. Under his leadership, the campus grew from one to 36 buildings and extended its footprint with the development of Tech Center Research Park in Newport News, VA. As part of his legacy, Meredith mentored many research park professionals over his long career and helped VTCRC win AURP’s Outstanding Research Park award in 2010.

Charles Dilks, former AURP President and President of Dilks Consulting, Inc.: Charlie Dilks, a former AURP President and Board Member, was one of the co-founders of AURP in 1986. For over 35 years, Charlie Dilks has served in various senior officer positions at The University City Science Center and managed the development and operation of the nation’s first urban research park in Philadelphia, helping it win AURP

Outstanding Research Park award in 2006. Charlie has conducted numerous consulting assignments in technology-led economic development as President of Dilks Consulting with Wexford Science & Technology as his largest client.

Rising Star Award: A New Generation of Innovation Leadership – Keisha Demps, Partnership Developer at Centennial Campus Partnership Office at NC State University: This award recognizes an individual exhibiting significant contributions to the development and success of communities of innovation.

Keisha Demps supports the ongoing development, promotion and implementation of NC State's Centennial Campus partnership model. She works to build and manage long-term collaborative relationships between NC State and partners from business, industry and government to advance research and development.

"From the time Keisha started on Centennial Campus, she was a Rising Star," said Leah Burton, AURP President and Executive Director, Centennial Campus at North Carolina State University. "Keisha has a drive for impact that has become invaluable to the campus' success. The role Keisha holds, Partnership Developer, is the heartbeat of the office and she has become a leader, mentor and champion for Centennial Campus. In essence, the ROI on Keisha Demps is off the charts."

Founder's Awards – In conjunction with AURP's 35th anniversary celebration, founding institutions were recognized for their farsighted vision of our collaborative and collective community of innovation. Recognized institutions were the **Research Triangle Park** (accepting **Scott Levitan**, CEO & President, Research Triangle Foundation) and Arizona State University (accepting **Kelly Sandin**, Senior Manager, Economic Development and Innovation Zones).

Vision Award – Vickie Palmer, Director of Operations & Events at AURP:

The Vision Award is occasionally given to recognize an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to the AURP community and to the innovation community as a whole. This year's Vision Award winner is Vickie Palmer.

Vickie was been a long-term member of the AURP team and the backbone of the Association. During her 14-year career at AURP, she has brought her talents not only with association management and event production, but her leadership has been crucial to the growth of the AURP community – helping to drive the vision, collaboration and idea sharing that have become staples of AURP and its conferences.

About AURP:

AURP, a not-for-profit international organization with offices in the Washington, DC area at the University of Maryland Discovery District and in Tucson, AZ at the University of Arizona Tech Park, focuses on creating communities of innovation and education for research parks both operating and planned, plus innovation districts, incubators, accelerators and the businesses that support the research park industry. AURP and its global membership promote research, institute-industry relations and innovation districts to foster innovation and to facilitate the transfer of technology from such institutions to the private sector. Learn more: www.aurp.net

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