

Lee to direct biotech institute

By HIRAN RATNAYAKE
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A chemical engineering professor at the University of Delaware has been named the new director of the Delaware Biotechnology Institute.

Kelvin Lee, already a faculty fellow with the institute, will take the reins Sept. 1.

Known for his work in Alzheimer's disease, he is replacing David Weir, who has directed the institute since its inception in 1998. Weir was named director of the university's new Office of Economic Innovation and Partnerships.

"I believe that DBI is a world-class research institute in the life sciences," Lee, who is presently in Amsterdam, wrote in an e-mail to The News Journal. "I am humbled to continue all of the excellent programs that Dr. David Weir initiated at DBI, and to build upon them to improve the infrastructure for life science research at the University of Delaware and in the state."

Lee came to Delaware last September, after spending a decade on the faculty at Cornell



Kelvin Lee, a chemical engineering professor at UD, will replace David Weir as the head of the Delaware Biotechnology Institute.

University in Ithaca, N.Y. At Cornell, his laboratory worked on new tools for measuring protein expression – the process by which a gene's information is converted into the structures and functions of cells.

When Lee arrived at the University of Delaware, he and his research group focused on developing an accurate diagnostic tool for Alzheimer's disease. He received funding while at Cornell from the National Institutes of Health for a study on identifying biomarkers for the disease.

That study, which found a set of validated biomarkers, was published in the medical journal *Annals of Neurology*. Lee is still working with his former colleagues at Cornell to find a therapy to treat Alzheimer's.

"We developed some technology that has proven to be particularly effective at the early diagnosis of the disease," he said.

Lee has also worked with a research group at the California Institute of Technology to study Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare, invariably fatal brain disorder. He holds a doctorate in chemical engineering and a minor in biology from the California Institute of Technology.

"Kelvin is very well known and he is a highly respected researcher," said Mark Barteau, UD senior vice provost for research and strategic initiatives. "He has experience and skills in dealing with our community and dealing outside the community, and that's important in the progress of DBI as a leader of biotech enterprise in the state."

Lee said he presently did not have enough information to say what the institute will do in terms of stem cell research. Weir, his predecessor, was one of the state's most outspoken proponents of embryonic stem cell research.

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