



Ready for Business

Turning technology into enterprises is task of new Science Center chief.

By Henry J. Holcomb

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After several tries, the University City Science Center has "finally found someone" who can execute a strategy to turn technology into businesses that transform the region's economy, its board chairman said.

Stephen S. Tang, 47, a veteran technology executive and consultant, was introduced to the center's staff yesterday and will begin work Feb. 4 as president and chief executive officer.

Tang comes to the 45-year-old center from Olympus America Inc., where he has been group vice president and general manager for U.S. operations of the \$1 billion life-sciences firm.

His appointment comes as interests such as the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, Gov. Rendell, and others are stepping up efforts to harness resources of the region's more than 80 colleges and universities for job creation, following examples of successes in Boston, California and North Carolina.

"My management style is community building," Tang said in an interview. "There has been an awakening, a tremendous amount of support" from the center's owners - the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University and others, along with investors who work with the center - to provide a broad range of resources, including money, to help turn ideas into profitable companies.

"They seem to be ready to step forward boldly for promoting the region's economy," Tang said.

Tang is the fourth person in four years to head the center, one of the nation's first urban research parks, a complex of 10 buildings along Market Street between 34th and 38th Streets, where 7,500 people work for 100 emerging companies.

The first of those four was Jill R. Felix, a former associate of the late real estate innovator Willard Rouse 3d. Felix ran the center for seven years, ending in 2004.

"When Jill came, the science center was languishing in West Philadelphia. Not many people were really aware of it. She straightened out our real estate and put us in a position for growth," said Richard P. Jaffe, a partner in the Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll L.L.P. law firm who has been chairman of the center's board for six years.

Felix left as pressure mounted for a leader with a scientific background who could help turn technology conceived at the region's more than 80 colleges and universities into businesses that could replace lost manufacturing jobs.

"The board felt the center's principal mission was to foster innovation and create a commercial innovation center," Jaffe said. So when Felix departed, the board hired a consultant to search worldwide for the right leader.

Pradip K. Banerjee, 52, who had headed an international life-sciences group for Accenture Ltd., the big consulting firm, took over in late 2005.

"We engaged a person we believed was the right person," Jaffe said. But, he added, "philosophical differences in how to drive our activities developed quickly." Banerjee resigned in January 2007, declining requests for comment.

His interim successor was Dean Lewis, who cofounded a biopharmaceutical company in Maryland before he became the center's chief financial officer in 2006. Jaffe said at the time that he might get the job permanently.

Another global search was initiated, and Lewis made the short list, Jaffe said. But the board was drawn to Tang, who had been a finalist when the board hired Banerjee.

"We picked a leader this time who is going to be proactive in seeking companies, who can create an environment rich in funding and take entrepreneurs on the road to attract others."

The center provides space, access to university laboratories and experts, funding and other resources to help technology companies get started. The board said it felt Tang had the resume and personality to get the diverse institutions and companies involved in the center to work together.

Craig R. Carnaroli, executive vice president of the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the search committee, predicted that Tang would form partnerships with all these entities "as opposed to developing programs on his own."

Tang has lived in the region for 25 years. He earned a master's degree in 1985 and a subsequent doctorate, both in chemical engineering, from Lehigh University. In 1992, he earned an executive M.B.A. from the Wharton School.

While a graduate student, he ran his own technology-assessment consulting firm. From 1988 to 1992, he was assistant director of the Lehigh University Center for Molecular Bioscience & Biotechnology.

"It's a wonderful time to come aboard," Tang said of his new post. "I hope to bring a real focus on commercialization of technology." His mission, he said, will be to identify "commercially viable ideas and refine them so funders can better evaluate them."

The science center, he added, can reduce the risk of spending money on new ideas and help its university stakeholders to "do things they can't do for themselves."