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Purdue announces top directors for 2 Discovery Park centers

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. —Purdue University's [Discovery Park](#) has appointed directors for two of its newest centers, the [Cyber Center](#) and [Center for the Environment](#).

Ahmed Elmagarmid, a Purdue computer science professor who has been the Cyber Center's interim director since its launch in August 2005, will become director, effective immediately.

John Bickham is coming to Purdue from Texas A&M University to lead the Center for the Environment. He will begin his duties on Sept. 1, succeeding Bernard Engel, who has been acting interim director since the center was launched in June 2005.

"Ahmed brings tremendous skill and experience to the position, providing us a strong foundation to grow Purdue's research in the ever-changing world of cyberinfrastructure," Alan Rebar, Discovery Park's executive director, said today (Thursday, Aug. 17) in announcing the two appointments. "And John will be a strong leader for our staff and Discovery Park researchers. His background is a wonderful fit for the Center for the Environment."



[Ahmed Elmagarmid](#)

Elmagarmid, who has been at Purdue since 1988, received his bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Dayton and his master's and doctoral degrees in computer and information science from Ohio State University.

"The Cyber Center brings together a diverse and rich research environment for cultivating major interdisciplinary projects, linking Discovery Park with the developers and users of technology, as well as those who study how technology and society interact at all the colleges and schools on the Purdue campus," Elmagarmid said. "We know we're making a difference in addressing the grand challenges of a world growing ever more technologically advanced and system driven."

His research has focused on database systems and their applications, as well as strategic planning in the information technology sector.

Elmagarmid is editor-in-chief of *Distributed and Parallel Databases: An International Journal* and is director of the

Indiana Center for Database Systems. He has received a Presidential Young Investigator Award from the National Science Foundation and distinguished alumni awards from Ohio State and the University of Dayton.

While on leave from Purdue, Elmagarmid worked as a chief scientist for Hewlett-Packard Co. from 2001-03. He also has done consulting for major computer and information technology companies Harris Corp., Molecular Design Ltd., Computer Sciences Corp. and UniSql Inc.

Purdue created the Cyber Center on the recommendation of an advisory committee formed in 2003 to help the university determine how to improve its cyberinfrastructure. Through the center, Purdue scientists are working to improve radio-frequency identification and sensor and wireless technologies that could be used for homeland security and other purposes.

The Cyber Center focuses on bringing together Purdue's information technology network, which is composed of powerful computers, software, facilities and large repositories of information, as well as the people and services needed to make the system work. The center also will serve as an incubator for new technologies that will help the economy.

Other existing Purdue facilities are now working with the Cyber Center, including the Center for Education and Research in Information Assurance and Security, Computing Research Institute, Purdue Homeland Security Institute and the Indiana Center for Database Systems.



Bickham is currently a professor of genetics, toxicology and wildlife and fisheries sciences at Texas A&M. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Dayton. He earned his doctoral degree from Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

[John Bickham](#)

"The Center for the Environment is striving to replace the traditional notion that environmental stewardship is a cost of doing business," Bickham said. "We have a new paradigm — that protecting environmental integrity is essential to prosperity. I look forward to continuing the progress Purdue has made in the Center for the Environment's successful first year and maintaining that edge when we compete for research and funding."

Bickham received the Distinguished Professor Award from the Association of Graduate Wildlife and Fisheries Scientists at Texas A&M, the Award for Excellence in Research from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Donald W. Tinkle Research Excellence Award from the Southwestern Association of Naturalists.

He currently is a member of the review board for the journal *Ecotoxicology*, is president-elect of the Texas Society of Mammalogists and is a member of the U.S. delegation to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission. He was president of the Southwestern Association of Naturalists from

1985-87.

His sponsored research has focused on population genetics of Steller sea lions and bowhead whales, biodiversity studies in wildlife and ecotoxicological studies in contaminated environments.

Bickham also has led research in capillary-based sequencing and genotyping at the Center for Biosystematics and Biodiversity and in using swallows as sentinels of environmental health in U.S.-Mexico border regions and elsewhere. His international studies include projects in Azerbaijan, Russia and Guatemala.

The Center for the Environment was established with the goal of examining how to protect the environment while sustaining a global economy. Researchers at the center study ways to model and predict the impact of activity on ecosystems, monitor environmental quality, manage natural resources and develop technologies that will help create a cleaner environment along with a strong economy.

Offering opportunities for students to participate, Center for the Environment researchers also are examining how entrepreneurship can lead to industrial partnerships for testing and commercialization of technologies that grow the economy and are environmentally beneficial.

Discovery Park is Purdue's \$300 million hub for interdisciplinary research and is home to 10 primary centers focusing on everything from biosciences, the environment and manufacturing to oncological sciences, cyberinfrastructure and health-care engineering.

An initial Lilly Endowment grant of \$26 million in 2001 provided support for the six original centers in Discovery Park: the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship, Birck Nanotechnology Center, Bindley Bioscience Center, e-Enterprise Center, Discovery Learning Center and the Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

A second Lilly Endowment grant of \$25 million in 2005 provided support for the Discovery Lecture Series as well as the seed funding for an additional four centers: Energy Center, Center for the Environment, Cyber Center and the Oncological Sciences Center.

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