Ocean research brings world scientists to A&M

By Curtis Culberson
Reporter

Top scientists from around the orld will meet at Texas A&M to iscuss findings from ocean-drilling peditions as an integral part of the cean Drilling Program, program irector Dr. Philip Rabinowitz says.

The program last week moved to a new $5 million facility in the niversity's new research park. ome of the world's foremost geosciice experts will meet in this new faility before and after a series of ean-drilling cruises in an effort to nravel the history of the Earth om samples obtained below the rface of the ocean bottom.

The 60,000-square-foot facility is he largest and most sophisticated cility in the world for storing and udying core samples from the cean floor, Rabinowitz says.

The facility also will serve as world eadquarters for the international rogram in which world scientists ill take core samples from waters ll over the globe.

A&M won the bid for the project ver the University of Miami and the cripps Institute of Oceanography the University of California at San iego. The Scripps Institute fornerly headquartered a similar proram, called the Deep Sea Drilling roject, which conducted research rom 1968-1983.

"The Ocean Drilling Program is y far the largest research program Texas A&M," Rabinowitz says.

The 10-year program is the gem the university's research proams, with expenditures reaching bout $30 million per year. A&M is anked 11th in the nation in reearch funding with $146.4 million. he ODP takes about 30 percent of hat amount.

The program receives internaional funding from the U.S. Naional Science Foundation, Canada, he Federal Republic of Germany, apan, the United Kingdom, and the uropean Science Foundation cean Drilling Consortium, which onsists of 12 other interested Euroean countries.

Each of these six members inolved with the program contributes 2.5 million per year to the proram.

Rabinowitz says the Soviets will oin the program in January.

As science operator for the pro*ram,* A&M can provide a definite dvantage for undergraduate and raduate students studying the geosciences, Rabinowitz says.

A&M is responsible for operating and staffing the drill ship and ensurng that adequate scientific analyses are performed on the core samples. A&M also must provide logistical and technical support.

"Our responsibilities as science operator give students a chance to go on drilling cruises and work firsthand with the best geoscientists in the world," Rabinowitz says.

"We have a staff of about 160 people and many are A&M students," he says.

A&M also is responsible for determining which scientists will go on each research cruise.

"We try to get a good representation from all the countries involved," Rabinowitz adds.

The program is managed by the Joint Oceanographic Institutions Inc., a nonprofit group of 10 major U.S. oceanographic institutions, including A&M's oceanography department.

But it is JOIDES, the Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling, that provides overall planning and program advice for the series of scientific cruises.

The JOIDES Resolution, the ODP's drilling vessel, is named after the international group of scientists and institutions overseeing the program. The vessel was converted from a commercial drilling ship into a sophisticated floating experiment station.

"The ship underwent many changes," Rabinowitz says. "We have constructed a ship with experimental capabilities that can't be matched on land or sea.

"The ship is capable of drilling in depths over 25,000 ft. while most commercial drilling vessels can only go as far as 3,000 (ft.)."

The drilling ship is 470 feet long and 70 feet wide, with a derrick that towers more than 200 feet above the water. All this allows the ship to handle a rig which, in turn, can handle more than 30,000 feet of drill pipe.

Rabinowitz says the ship has seven stories of laboratories, including a chemistry lab, an X-ray lab, a petrology lab and a photography lab.

Rabinowitz adds that the ship has two mainframe VAX-750 computers that communicate by satellite with two other mainframes stationed in the new program facility.

"The two computer systems completely mirror each other, giving us vast computer capability," he says.

The ship already has completed 12 cruises, uncovering new information about the causes of long-term changes in the Earth's atmosphere, its oceans, polar regions, biosphere and magnetic field as well as information on climate and tectonic evolution.

Another 2-month cruise is planned for January to the Antarctic, Rabinowitz says.

After each expedition, the different scientists who conduct research in these many different labs publish their findings in two volumes. The first volume is an on-site report and the second will be published several years later, after more in-depth research has been conducted.

"Of course, they'll be bound in maroon," he says.

Rabinowitz says that since the scientists will work on their articles at the new facility, the University will get worldwide exposure.

"Many (scientists) are surprised when they see A&M," he says. "There's more down here than most people think."

A&M to open ODP facility, University research park

By Curtis Culberson
Reporter

Texas A&M will dedicate the new world headquarters of the Ocean Drilling Program Friday at 4 p.m., officially opening the University's new research park on Discovery Drive, located just west of the veterinary school.

Board of Regents Chairman David Eller will present the $5 million facility to University President Dr. Frank E. Vandiver.

Dr. Mark Money, vice chancellor for research park and corporate relations, will give a short address to open the 434-acre research park which is designed to attract high-tech industry to the University community.

Michel Halbouty, chairman of the Geosciences and Earth Resources Advisory Council, and Dr. D. James Baker, president of Joint Oceanographic Institutions, Inc., also will speak at the dedication.

Dr. Melvin Friedman, dean of the College of Geosciences, will preside over the program and ODP Director Philip Rabinowitz will speak on the presentation of the new program facility.

The new 60,000-square-foot Ocean Drilling complex is the world's largest and most sophiscated facility of its kind, Rabinowitz said, and the world's best facility for studying core samples taken from below the ocean floor. Construction already has begun on a 40,000-square-foot office and laboratory facility for the research park's first corporate tenant, Granada Genetics. A subsidiary of Granada Corp.

Harris County legislators offered money to attend Metro parties

HOUSTON (AP) — Some legislators and Common Cause are criticizing an offer by a Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority lobbyist to pay Harris County legislators for attending Metro cocktail parties.

Lobbyist Sandy Sanford, hired to help influence legislators to preserve Metro's 1-cent sales tax dedication, told the *Houston Post* in a copyrighted story Wednesday he expects each lawmaker who attends to leave the meetings $500 richer.

Sanford wrote in an invitation sent to 33 legislators that money raised at two upcoming receptions in Houston will be divided among their office-holder accounts, funds used to defray expenses associated with legislative business.

State Rep. Randy Pennington, R-Houston, said he declined Sanford's invitation and said his colleagues should be more than uneasy about it.

"They should be incensed," he said. "It's such an outright attempt to buy special interest from the Legislature."

Of seven legislators contacted Tuesday by the *Post*, only Rep. Tony Polumbo, D-Houston, was unconcerned, saying he believes the meeting is a crucial one.

MTA board Chairman John King said he does not consider the money payment for attendance.

The 300 to 400 invitations included a request for a $500 gift.