



NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM of NATURAL SCIENCES

NATURE RESEARCH center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Museum's new Nature Research Center to partner with UNC System

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RALEIGH — The challenge for the 21st century is to find effective ways to enhance Americans' understanding of how scientific research relates to and affects our daily lives. From the human genome project to global warming to space exploration, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the University of North Carolina have enhanced the public's understanding and appreciation of the world's complex diversity, health issues and natural phenomena. What needs to occur is a melding of UNC's mission to discover, create and apply knowledge with that of the Museum's to engage North Carolina's public in a meaningful ways to understand how scientific research affects their daily lives and contributes to the solution of societal problems.

New scientific discoveries, medical therapies and natural phenomena are happening at a rate that the average citizen — let alone our youth — cannot possibly keep up with. Most science organizations are content to distribute to the public packaged messages about what we know, but that approach is proving less and less effective for adults and children to understand “how we know it” and how it benefits you. This amplified public engagement using scientists and professional science “translators” takes new approaches and commitment to provide teachers, students and all the public with a hands-on learning opportunity and a chance to engage in current scientific research and discovery.

Universities and science museums must collaborate to set priorities for investment in science, inquiry and education. The nature of scientific uncertainty, the interdependence of the fields of science and technology, and the benefits for citizen participation and support calls for strong partnerships between the universities and science museums. The Museum of Natural Sciences is building an innovative Nature Research Center to engage the public in scientific research that affects their daily lives. The Center will provide the environment where University faculty and Museum staff can work collaboratively and seamlessly to provide a dynamic science learning experience for students, teachers and the general public.

A business plan was produced by a committee outlining the Nature Research Center programs that should attract top UNC leadership for science and education initiatives. While the Center's program budget will focus on informal and formal science and education exposure, the science activities will be conducted by UNC program heads in Earth Observation and Biodiversity, Genomics and Microbiology, Geology and Paleontology, and Space Observation. Other areas of current research will continue in Environmental and Human Health, Medicine and Biotechnology. The Nature Research Center/UNC partnership will include six scientific leadership positions and the Center director's position, each of which will be co-funded and jointly appointed, as well as an 18-member jointly appointed Science Advisory Board.

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