

## Where did the 2004 President's Commissioned Conference on Medical Devices take us?

The 2004 President's Commissioned Conference on Medical Devices was filled with enlightening and vibrant discussion that called all participants to take bold steps to ensure that Minnesota remains the World Leader in the Medical Device Arena. Specifically, novel ideas were presented by local politicians, University leaders and high ranking industry personnel on how to ensure that we:

- Maintain the optimal industrial environment in the State
- Optimize the training of the next generation of device developers
- Collaborate more effectively in order to maintain our regional leadership

It was also agreed that the University of Minnesota was uniquely positioned to play a vital role in facilitating communication between all interested parties. The participants of this first conference left the meeting with a new passion for finding ways to keep Minnesota at the forefront of medical device development.

One way to measure the success of any summit meeting is to look back and see if new collaborations, programs or other initiatives were subsequently established. Numerous examples resulted from the 2004 President's Conference, a few of which are described below.

- Dale Wahlstrom, a Vice President at Medtronic and one of the 2004 conference panelists, is now the Founding Chairman of the Board of Directors of the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota. The charter of this alliance is to help local businesses grow, help new businesses form and attract others to relocate to Minnesota. Members of the alliance represent industry, academia, state government and local health care organizations. The discussions that occurred at the 2004 President's conference catalyzed the formation and structure of this non-profit alliance.

- Medical Alley and the Minnesota Biotechnology Association (MNBIO) merged into one organization. According to CEO Don Gerhardt, the merger discussions began around the convergence of bioscience and medical technology and the need to develop a single voice for the biosciences. Both Medical Alley and MNBIO had a shared interest in life sciences and biosciences and in supporting the growth of the industry. Don Gerhardt recently stated that, "Combining Medical Alley and MNBIO was a logical way to achieve coordination of effort and focus. We think a single voice and a concentrated effort will produce more actionable results for the industry in the state and region". The merger underscores Medical Alley's mission of continuing to grow Minnesota's leadership position in health care.

- Although Biotechnology incubators facilities were planned to be developed in both St. Paul and Minneapolis prior to the 2004 President's Conference on Medical Devices, it was at this conference that attendees identified the relative importance of such facilities to the state as a whole. In one such incubator, developed in association with the University, several faculty members have taken

up residence to transform novel technologies into potential businesses.

- Creation of a new graduate training program at the University. Under the guidance of Dr. John Bischof, a unique MD/MS curriculum was developed for students interested specifically in medical device design. The new program received a very generous endowment gift from local entrepreneur and U of MN medical school graduate Dr. Scott Augustine, who noted that this is exactly the kind of program that he would have loved to been involved in when he was going through graduate school.

- A major effort has been put forth to develop a Medical Device Center at the University. Professor Arthur Erdman is leading the charge to see that the University takes full advantage of its unique environment; specifically, being surrounded by over 500 medical device companies right in our backyard. Working with numerous faculty members who have a strong interest in medical device design, local business leaders and the University administration's plans are rapidly emerging to create such a center and potentially house it within a new building on campus. Steve Crouch, the new Institute of Technology Dean, has made medical devices and the Medical Device Center key initiatives of his new administration.

Finally, it should be mentioned in October of 2004, the Lillehei Heart Institute at the University of Minnesota celebrated the 50th anniversary of open heart surgery by cross-circulation, which was pioneered here in Minnesota. At this event, we heard from world leaders in the fields of cardiac surgery and devices as to how vital the discoveries made at the University were to all advances made in this discipline within the past half century.

In summary, the organizers of the 2004 conference look back over the past year with extremely high level of satisfaction that the original program goals were met beyond our expectations. Interestingly, no sooner had the 2004 conference ended did President Bruininks offer to support the 2nd President's Commissioned Conference on Medical Devices. Hence, we are here today anticipating the insightful presentations, discussions, and general wisdom that will be imparted at this 2005 President's Conference.

Respectfully submitted by,  
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