

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Keith Nichols, News Services, 919/515-3470 or
keith_nichols@ncsu.edu

Sept. 27, 2005

Oblinger Joins New National Coalition To Attract STEM Students

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Carolina State University Chancellor James L. Oblinger is one of 11 university and business leaders who have joined with the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) to form the Coalition for America's High Tech Future. The coalition will undertake a series of initiatives aimed at doubling the number of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) graduates over the next 10 years.

National Bureau of Economic Research statistics show that as late as 1975, the United States had more engineering and scientific Ph.D. graduates than Europe, and more than three times as many as all of Asia. The U.S. share of world bachelor's engineering degrees granted – the key degree in engineering – dropped in half in the 1990s (from 12 percent in 1991 to 6 percent in 2000). By 2001, the EU granted 40 percent more science and engineering doctorates than the United States.

“As North Carolina's flagship university for science and technology, and one of the nation's leading universities, NC State is well positioned to take a leadership role in the effort to attract and graduate more students in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields,” Oblinger said. “The history and tradition of our university includes an ability to listen and respond to the needs of the people of North Carolina and the nation – including contributions to economic development and workforce capacity. This partnership between universities and business will produce solutions to the troubling trend of STEM graduates.”

“U.S. leadership in high-technology industries is being challenged like never before,” said ITAA President Harris N. Miller. “Increasing global competition from countries like India and China is fueling major concerns in corporate America about how well the United States is developing the pipeline of skilled STEM workers. This troubling trend is rapidly becoming a top priority for business leaders. Through the coalition, we intend to help reverse the slide and bolster America's competitive edge.”

Miller said U.S. economic vitality and America's competitive advantage depend on ready access to highly skilled IT workers. The need for STEM talent spans all industries, including technology, healthcare, manufacturing, business, and defense.

- more -

To ensure that the United States maintains global leadership in the areas of research, entrepreneurship, innovation, capital investment, employment, and overall wealth creation, Miller said industry must work with government and higher education to make dramatic investments aimed at expanding the STEM talent pool.

Oblinger pointed to a \$3.3 million grant received in March from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) program as evidence of NC State's expertise and commitment to attracting more STEM students. The grant will fund efforts to increase the number of minority students entering the professoriate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

NC State is ranked in the top 20 institutions nationally in granting bachelor's degrees to underrepresented minority students in STEM disciplines, and third in the number of African-American Ph.D.s in engineering. NC State ranks second in the nation in the number of bachelor of science degrees awarded among all engineering colleges and third in all engineering degrees.

"To compete for the jobs and opportunities of the future, we must attract more students to these critical fields," Oblinger said. "NC State is placing special emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math education at the K-12 level, using our research to help train and retrain new teachers and to support teachers in the classroom."

The coalition's plans include a research study and outreach to the federal government – including the president – and elected officials on a plan to double the STEM workforce over 10 years. The coalition will also collaborate with other groups addressing the STEM workforce challenge, and will soon publish a research paper on innovation and the STEM workforce.

In addition to Oblinger, members of the coalition include: Phil Friedman, president and chief executive officer, Computer Generated Solutions; Sidney Fuchs, president, TASC, Northrop Grumman IT; Ann Goodnight, president, SAS Foundation; Jim Goodnight, president and chief executive officer, SAS Institute; John Hitt, president, University of Central Florida; Dennis McGuire, founder and chairman, Technology Partners Inc.; Alan Merten, president, George Mason University; Dave Sanders, chairman, ITAA Board and president, Commercial Solutions Perot Systems; John Schwarz, chief executive officer, Business Objects; Ernst Volgenau, chairman, SRA International.

The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) provides global public policy, business networking and national leadership to promote the continued rapid growth of the IT industry. ITAA consists of over 350 corporate members throughout the U.S. The association plays the leading role in issues of IT industry concern including information security, taxes and finance policy, digital intellectual property protection, telecommunications competition, workforce and education, immigration, online privacy and consumer protection, government IT procurement, human resources and e-commerce policy. For more information visit www.ita.org. ITAA is secretariat of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance, consisting of 67 IT trade associations around the world.