

5 Questions with ...

CYNTHIA HELPHINGSTINE

An interview with the new translational scientific officer for BioCrossroads and IU

In May, BioCrossroads and Indiana University hired Cynthia Helpingstine to fill the new position of translational scientific officer. She will help the university identify the market potential of research projects, especially those in the IU School of Medicine and at the Bloomington and IUPUI campuses.

Before joining BioCrossroads, Helpingstine was president and CEO of Tienta Sciences Inc., and vice president of business development for Inproteo, where she was responsible for commercializing technology resulting from Inproteo's research investments. Prior to that, she was president of Biotron Group Inc., a consulting firm.

IBJ: *Identifying early-stage discoveries that someday could turn out to be profitable products sounds like an incredibly difficult task. Is there a proven method you will follow or is some of it simply playing a hunch?*

HELPHINGSTINE: In my newly created position at BioCrossroads, my role is to help "translate" research discoveries made at Indiana University into new therapies that ultimately will benefit patients. Moving research discoveries from "bench to bedside" sounds easy, but in reality, it takes an enormous amount of resources and hard work to accomplish.

One of my first priorities is to promote a "translational culture" within IU to enhance awareness of how commercialization and protection of their discoveries can advance their research and lead to cutting-edge medical products that improve health care. I also want to build awareness among the



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IU research community of alternative sources of research funding.

A rigorous due-diligence process will also be critical to determine if the technology has a market and if a therapy developed around the technology is significantly better than existing therapies. If a technology meets our criteria, we'll bring together the resources needed to move it "across the finish line," so it ultimately can help residents of Indiana—and beyond—to lead healthier and longer lives.

IBJ: *Later-stage venture capital is far easier to attract than angel and seed investment, especially in Indiana. How difficult will that make your job and what will you do to lure more*

early-stage funding?

HELPHINGSTINE: There is good news in Indiana regarding the availability of investment capital. In 2005, venture capital investment rose 40 percent over 2004 in Indiana.

Indiana is fortunate to have a number of resources for companies seeking investment at the earliest stage. Seed money is available from the IU Medical Group Foundation Inc. for early-stage investments based upon intellectual property from the School of Medicine. We also have the \$6 million Indiana Seed Fund managed by BioCrossroads and the 21st Century Research and Technology Fund. Early-stage companies can also apply for

grants from the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs.

I would say that money isn't our biggest challenge. Our success depends on the continuous generation of ideas and innovations—and on making sure we have the procedures in place to move these ideas to the marketplace. If it's a good idea, we'll find the resources to move it forward.

IBJ: *Landing seed investment often hinges on the researcher as much as the potential product. Will you be in charge of attracting talented researchers to IU as well as working with existing scientists?*

HELPHINGSTINE: As part of the Indiana University Life Sciences Strategic Plan, the university has set a goal of recruiting 500 new researchers to help IU double its clinical research dollars by 2013. Ultimately, a larger base of research and discovery efforts at IU will help expand the cutting-edge medical services and health care delivered to the public. I will be supporting IU leadership in their recruitment efforts to strengthen and expand IU's translational research efforts.

It makes sense that having more researchers will result in more talent, a bigger network for ideas and more intellectual property. These new researchers will complement the work of our existing base of top-notch research talent to expand the breadth and depth of our research programs, which will attract even more researchers to IU.

IBJ: *Determining the marketability of a product involves a great deal of research. How much help will you have in this process?*

HELPHINGSTINE: I plan to take full advantage of a variety of resources available to me, including those of BioCrossroads. The partnership between IU and BioCrossroads illustrates how IU is seeking to leverage the resources of BioCrossroads to create value for the university, just as BioCrossroads leverages life science assets all over the state to build Indiana's life science economy. My new position is a tangible step that IU is taking to implement their strategic life sciences plan; the partnership with BioCrossroads makes it a truly unique approach. BioCrossroads has access to

industry and the academic, philanthropic and the financial communities that can help me move ideas forward. From my perspective, I couldn't ask for a better match.

• I will also leverage the existing resources within IU, such as the Indiana University Research Technology Corp. and the IU Medical Group Foundation seed fund to commercialize innovations that will advance human health and the Indiana economy.

IBJ: *You gained a wealth of corporate experience prior to this new position. What's the best way to spur new spinout businesses from large established life sciences companies, such as Eli Lilly and Co., Roche Diagnostics Corp., and Baxter Healthcare Corp., where you previously worked?*

HELPHINGSTINE: First, the resources needed to support the growth of these new spinout businesses must be in place external to the parent company. The perfect example of this concept is CoLucid, a company formed from a migraine molecule that was spun out of Lilly. CoLucid represents the first time that Lilly has spun

out a molecule to create a company in Indiana. It happened now because of initiatives like BioCrossroads, the Indiana Future Fund and Indiana Seed Fund, which have allowed us to harness existing resources and expertise and add additional "new economy" resources to make us as competitive as possible.

In an academic setting, just like in industry, there must be a recognized market need for the technology a large company is spinning out. There also needs to be an internal "champion" from either the business or scientific side. Moving a technology through all the phases of development to market takes time, money and other resources. Unless you have a champion to help drive it through the pipeline, it will stall.

BioCrossroads is continuing to take steps to encourage more spin-outs from large companies in Indiana. My focus is to help Indiana University move even more research discoveries out of its laboratories and into the community to create jobs for Hoosiers and improve health care. •

"QuadraSpec will revolutionize the way doctors and hospitals diagnose patients," Chad Barden, president and CEO of QuadraSpec, said. QuadraSpec is commercializing its cutting-edge diagnostic technology through Purdue University's Research Park.

QuadraSpec utilizes a CD that tests blood for a variety of disorders. Instead of the traditional method, which requires separate blood tests for each abnormality, QuadraSpec's CDs and specialized reader can scan blood for multiple diseases at once. With a single blood sample, doctors can diagnose patients within their offices, instead of the lengthy, costly and sometimes traumatic process of numerous tests, long waits and multiple visits to doctors' offices and laboratories.

"We're able to run fast," Chad said. "We hit the ground running from day one, and we haven't slowed down. We're out to make a huge difference in the medical community through aggressive growth and continued innovation."

QuadraSpec - a client since 2004.

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