

Heading to Siberia: UH signs agreement with Russian Academy of Sciences

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Ruling out the weather, Houston and Siberia have a lot in common. Sharing interests in medical research, the energy industry and space exploration, the University of Houston recently signed an agreement with two prestigious Russian institutions – the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Novosibirsk State University.

As part of a visit to the United States that included stops in Washington, D.C., and Houston, leading Russian scientists, including the vice president of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the rector of Novosibirsk State University, commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The visit culminated in penning a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at UH to collaborate on academic themes of joint interest and to exchange students and faculty.

“There are so many developments in science and technology that increasingly need the benefit of collaborative efforts,” said Donald L. Birx, vice chancellor for the UH System and vice president for research for UH. “More and more, we’re seeing talented individuals and groups worldwide pooling resources and working better together than ever before. This partnership will facilitate this sharing of talent – both on the faculty and student levels – that is so crucial in today’s expanded research endeavors, creating scholarly communities across traditional lines.”

Past and current collaborations between faculty at UH and researchers at

the Russian Academy of Sciences have bolstered this new formal agreement, giving the opportunity for many areas of the university to be involved in research with the Russian Academy. Already partnering with several groups on campus, the Russian Academy is interested, jointly with Novosibirsk State University, in expanding collaborations over a larger spectrum at UH. The MOU will facilitate more direct alliances in the future.

Previously, the two institutions partnered in the geosciences and mathematics. More recently, they are involved in a project that extends the unique thin film science and technology developments of the Wake Shield Facility – flown on three Space Shuttle flights – to the International Space Station with a plan to develop new thin film materials in the vacuum of space. Heading up this present effort are Alex Ignatiev, professor of physics, chemistry and electrical and computer engineering, with his team at UH's Center for Advanced Materials, and Oleg Pchelyakov of the Russian Academy's Department of Growth and Structure of Semiconductor Materials.

“The opportunity presented by the signing of this agreement will allow enhanced research collaboration in fields beyond the current geosciences and materials sciences efforts,” Ignatiev said. “This arrangement opens up further opportunities for UH of not only research collaboration with the highly regarded Russian Academy of Sciences, but also the exchange of students and faculty.”

Source: University of Houston

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