

National Centers of Excellence

NEWS RELEASE

NCOE Announces Establishment of GAMBIT Center

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.--The National Centers of Excellence announced today the establishment of the Garn Advanced Manufacturing Business, Information & Technology (GAMBIT) Center. Since his flight on the Space Shuttle and his retirement from the U. S. Congress, former Senator Jake Garn has taken the lead in many public service activities. Garn served as Chairman of the Board of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Utah for 7 years during its inception and startup. The MEP Utah Center is recognized as a premier center among all the NIST MEP Centers that serve manufacturers throughout the 50 states. In specific recognition of Garn's dedication to the furtherance of science and technology, the announcement of the GAMBIT Center was made to coincide with the XIX Planetary Congress: The Association of Space Explorers annual conference held this year in Salt Lake City, Utah, Garn's home town.



Former U.S. Sen. Jake Garn, who flew aboard Space Shuttle Discovery in 1985, is a lifetime member of the Association of Space Explorers that convened its annual gathering in Salt Lake City, Utah earlier this week.

Photo courtesy The Salt Lake Tribune

Mike Alder, Chairmen of the National Centers of Excellence, points out that, “technology commercialization ultimately takes place when new innovations and technology are incorporated into competitive products by manufacturers.” The GAMBIT Center will be focused on providing services and promoting support for manufacturers, who are striving to implement the latest best practices and incorporate new technologies into their products. A recently completed National COE study documents that state funding of technology development through local Centers of Excellence and related activities has increased 10 fold over the past 8 years. “This dramatic increase in state funding

is recognition of the importance of technology development to economic growth at the state level,” emphasized Alder.

An initial thrust of the GAMBIT Center will be to encourage federal participation in state technology development projects. The GAMBIT Center will pursue a new approach to technology commercialization that will complement the traditional research and development approach. The GAMBIT Center will pursue identifying and assessing technology needs of established product producers. The technology needs assessment will be directed at the 350,000 small manufacturers who represent more than 98% of the product producers in the U.S. Although these companies have management, marketing and production capabilities in place, and are successfully producing products today, they have very limited financial and technical resources to pursue the next generation of new products.

Federal matching funds directed at these small manufacturers’ technologies needs will permit them to secure the outside resources necessary to facilitate incorporating such new technologies and innovations into the next generation of products. Although matching of state funded technology development represents only 2% of the federal R&D annual budget, it would have an enormous economic impact when directed to these small manufacturing enterprise technology needs. Alder points out that, “The largest payroll in former Senator Garn’s home state of Utah is manufacturing, which is the case for most states.”

The GAMBIT Center will assume responsibility for the Technology Needs Assessment pilot project already initiated by National COE. “We are using an online needs assessment system developed by an IT company from Senator Garn’s home state, where IT is a significant part of the state’s economy. I’m told that there are more IT companies in Utah than there are fast food outlets,” Alder added. The GAMBIT Center will also have access to a new proprietary multivariate graphical data analysis system. This tool will expedite the analysis and decisions associated with the massive amounts of data that will result from consolidating technology needs assessment data from all 50 states.

Summary information from the report (“State Technology Development and Commercialization Programs - A Survey of the States”) will be available online at: www.NationalCOE.org following its formal announcement next week, which coincides with the 9th Annual State Science & Technology Conference in Atlanta, GA. A detailed presentation of the GAMBIT Center’s effort to encourage federal support for state-directed technology commercialization is scheduled in Washington, D.C. on Monday, October 24. The presentation will be made to the Directors of all MEP Centers throughout the U.S. It is expected that the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) MEP program will play a unique and vital role in implementing the technology needs assessment project (see www.mep.org).

Former Senator Garn will serve as the initial chairman of the board of the GAMBIT Center until the organization is adequately staffed. As new developments occur and activities progress, further information will be available on the Center’s new web site, www.GAMBITCenter.org.