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ASU joins Biomimicry Institute

Arizona State University has become the newest member of the Biomimicry Affiliate Program of the Montana-based Biomimicry Institute. ASU is the only U.S. institution to be awarded affiliate status and joins Iberoamericana University, Mexico City, and the Ontario College of Art & Design, Toronto.

The agreement between ASU and the Biomimicry Institute will foster greater cooperation in a variety of areas. They include developing biomimicry-based courses and other educational opportunities, pursuing joint grant opportunities and stimulating the development of biomimicry-based technologies and ventures at ASU.

Biomimicry is an emerging discipline that explores the materials, processes and functions of nature for clues to solving human problems. The approach is being used by companies around the world as a strategy to guide the sustainable design of a wide range of products, from energy efficient buildings and self-cleaning paints to brighter electronic displays and power-sipping impellers and fans.

ASU has become a leader in biomimicry. Examples include:

- InnovationSpace – a joint venture established by ASU's Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, W.P. Carey School of Business and the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering – is pioneering biomimicry in its core curriculum as a fundamental strategy for creating sustainable product concepts.
- Center for Bio-Inspired Solar Fuel Production – backed by a \$14 million grant from the Department of Energy, the center focuses on unlocking the secrets of energy conversion in photosynthetic organisms and will use these natural processes as a model for creating an artificial system of solar-powered fuel production.
- ASU's School of Life Sciences will host a conference on "Social Biomimicry: Insect Societies and Human Design," Feb. 18-20.

The international conference will convene biologists, computer scientists, artists, designers, architects and engineers who will explore how the collective behavior and nest architecture of social insects can inspire more efficient and sustainable solutions to human challenges in areas such as manufacturing, communications, transportation and green building.

"Arizona State University faculty are exploring a wide range of possible applications for biomimicry," said ASU President Michael Crow.

"We have active research in biomimicry that could affect such fields as renewable energy, new materials and bioengineering. We also are working to integrate biomimicry into our curriculum offerings to our students, with the goal of educating future generations of students in this important technological field."

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Raymond Mendez, the "original insect wrangler," will headline the Social Insect Science EXPO on Feb. 20 at the Desert Botanical Garden.

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