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TI giving equipment to colleges<P>\$6 million deal forms research consortium

By Jayne Noble Suhler / Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

Published 10-10-1998

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Four area universities will get \$6 million worth of high-tech lab equipment from Texas Instruments on Monday - giving the schools as a group the kind of electronics research power they would never have individually.

The deal is also a good one for TI - which gets a tax write-off on the equipment - because the academic research will focus on electronic devices and materials in which the company has interest.

"For us to write this off and give it off to the universities is a better solution than selling it to someone else because it keeps it in our back yard," said Dr. Yoshio Nishi, TI's senior vice president.

The equipment and tools fell into disuse after the company eliminated some of its defense and memory research programs and reorganized its research and development department, officials said.

The University of Texas at Dallas, University of Texas at Arlington, University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University formed the Metroplex Research Consortium for Electronic Devices and Materials as part of the deal. It is the first collaboration of its kind among the science and engineering schools at the four universities.

"The sum is going to be larger than the individual components," said Robert Magnusson, chairman of UTA's electrical engineering department.

The equipment will be divided among the universities based on the kind of research they do. For instance, UNT, which has one of the nation's best-known accelerator laboratories, will get a particle accelerator.

Educators said they intend to share the equipment as well as their students, faculty and ideas to conduct joint experiments. And as a consortium, they said, they will be able to compete for research grants, students and faculty that they could not get on their own.

"By coming to a consensus, we've really enhanced and actually leveraged our capabilities," said Sam Matteson, chairman of UNT's physics department.

Dr. Wiley Kirk, director of the Nanofab Center at UTD, said that the consortium "can open pathways we couldn't risk by ourselves."

More than 65 faculty and staff members and 4,500 graduate and undergraduate students are

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involved with research projects at the four universities and would benefit from access to the equipment, officials said.

As electronics get smaller and smaller, consortium members said, they want to be on the front lines of research, exploring materials that eventually will result in faster and more efficient electronics equipment.

Consortium members said they would focus on research involving electronic and optical devices, designs and circuits. The equipment also will be used to help teach and conduct research in physics, chemistry and materials science.

The donation from TI serves as a catalyst to bring the intellectual and business communities together, said Dr. **Zeynep** Celik-Butler, assistant dean of SMU's graduate studies and research.

"The interaction with TI is just the beginning. . . . We'd like to form a united front of expertise and capabilities to industry both in the metroplex and, really, nationwide," Dr. Butler said. "We'd like to continue to attract more contracts and grants and do better and bigger things."

Dr. Kirk said companies have inquired about the consortium's research and whether they can benefit.

Once projects are started, there will be a snowball effect in terms of how business in Texas and around the nation perceives Dallas' intellectual community, said Dr. Nishi at TI.

"What I'd like to do with this effort," he said, "is to . . . ignite new inventions and new ideas and create an even more exciting environment for the business and intellectual community."

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