



DONALD DANFORTH
PLANT SCIENCE CENTER

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Roger Beachy to Join Obama Administration

Danforth Center President Appointed First Director of New Agency

ST. LOUIS, MO, September 24, 2009 – Dr. Roger N. Beachy, the founding President of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, MO, has been appointed the first Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) by President Barack Obama. Beachy will join the agency on October 5, 2009.

According to the formal agreement, Beachy will be “on loan” to NIFA from the Danforth Plant Science Center. On assuming the new position, he will transition to his new role of Vice Chairman of the Center’s Board of Trustees, a move that was originally scheduled to occur next year.

“This exciting new agency is critical to growing our agriculture economy and ensures that innovation in plant science and agriculture research will flourish. I have been a strong proponent of the NIFA as have the scientists at the Danforth Plant Science Center, and of course our Chairman, Dr. Danforth. I am honored to have been selected for this position by the President and am committed to sharing my knowledge and experiences to help shape research and its applications that will impact agriculture and food in the U.S. and in developing economies,” Beachy said.

The mission of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is to stimulate and fund the research and technological innovations that will enhance and make American agriculture more productive and environmentally sustainable while ensuring the economic viability of agriculture and production. The Institute was developed as a result of a task force chaired by William H. Danforth and appointed by then Secretary of Agriculture, Ann M. Veneman. The Danforth Task Force recommended that Congress authorize the creation of NIFA as a way to strengthen agriculture research and to attract additional highly competitive research scientists to this field of endeavor. A growing program in competitive research grants will be a hallmark of the new agency.

“I am thrilled and sad at the same time.” said William H. Danforth, chair Danforth Plant Science Center Board of Trustees. “Working closely with Roger Beachy has been one of the privileges of my life; he has lead and orchestrated the success of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center. I hate to see him less active in St. Louis even for a little while. On the other hand I believe strongly in the NIFA. No one in the world would be a better founding director. Our board saw the situation the same way.”

In May the Danforth Center’s Board of Directors approved a succession plan that would ensure continuity of the organization as it moves into its second decade. Under this scenario Beachy was to transition from Center President to Vice Chairman of the board. That transition will now occur more rapidly. A search committee, headed by Dr. P. Roy Vagelos, has already begun an international search for Beachy’s successor with a target date for implementation in July 2010. Until the new president is identified and on board, Philip Needleman, Ph.D, member of the Center’s Board of Trustees will serve as Interim President.

Needleman has been a member of the Center’s Board of Trustees since 2005. He spent 25 years at Washington University School of Medicine, where he was professor and chairman of the department of pharmacology. In 1989 he moved to industry, becoming senior vice president of Monsanto. In 1993 he became president of Searle Research and Development. He was also senior executive vice president and chief scientist of Pharmacia from 2000 to 2003. Needleman is a member of the National Academy of Science and the Institute of Medicine. He is the recipient of many awards and honors, including the John Jacob Abel Award of the American Pharmacology Society and the Research Achievement Award of the American Heart Association.

Since Beachy became the center’s first president on January 1, 1999, he has been responsible for setting the scientific mission of the center; under his watch the Center has achieved several milestones worth noting including:

- The establishment of a \$75 million award-winning facility;
- Recruiting more than two dozen outstanding principal investigators and 170 plant scientists, including 95 Ph.Ds;
- Attracting more than \$75 million in research grants, including a \$5.9 million grant from the National Science Foundation for maize genome research and two grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation totaling \$12 million as part of the Grand Challenges in Global

Health initiative which seeks to identify and direct funds to the most critical scientific challenges in global health;

- Working in partnership with the USDA to locate a laboratory and staff at the center;
- Establishing the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Institute for Renewable Fuels through a \$25 million gift from the Taylor Family, the Institute recently attracted a \$15 million award from the Department of Energy;
- Creating a research park on the Danforth Center campus to maximize opportunities for commercializing promising plant and life science companies that will contribute to the economic development and growth of the St. Louis region. The first of three buildings of the BioResearch and Development Growth Park opened on June 16, 2009 and is already 65% leased;
- Formation of the center's first new joint venture Agrius BioForms LLC (ABF), which is working to commercialize a proprietary protein production system developed by Danforth Center and U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists;
- An endowment of nearly \$100 million;
- Establishing, participating in, and promoting the international programs of the Danforth Center; these programs have had great technical success, and will, if successful, have significant impact on food production and poverty alleviation in developing countries in Africa and Asia;
- Establishing the Global Harvest Alliance, a partnership between the Danforth Center, Washington University School of Medicine and Saint Louis Children's Hospital to address childhood malnutrition.

Prior to joining the Danforth Center, Beachy held academic positions at Washington University in St. Louis, and The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, where he was co-founder of the International Laboratory for Tropical Agricultural Biotechnology and held the Scripps Family Chair in Cell Biology. He is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences the premier scientific society in the United States, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology and the AAAS: he is also a Foreign Associate of science academies in India. A few of his awards include the Wolf Prize in Agriculture, the D. Robert Hoagland Award from the Society of Plant Biologists and Ruth Allen Award from the American Phytopathological Society. Beachy has served as Chair of the AAAS Section on Agriculture, Food and Renewable Resources and is President of the International Association of Plant Biotechnology, among other activities. He

also serves on a number of boards of non-profit organizations, including of St. Louis Children's Hospital, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Science Center, Academy of Science of St. Louis,

About The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center

Founded in 1998, the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center is a not-for-profit research institute with a mission to improve the human condition through plant science. Research at the Danforth Center will feed the hungry and improve human health, preserve and renew the environment, and enhance the St. Louis region and Missouri as a world center for plant science. Please visit www.danforthcenter.org for additional information.

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