

Research park builds bridge between science, business

By **CHRIS SHOLLY**
Staff Writer

HERSHEY — As a young child, Hans Pfister decided he wanted to become an inventor when he grew up. Along the way, he switched paths.

“As an inventor you’re either poor or rich. Either you make it and your idea is good and ends up on a store shelf and you’re making money, or you’re very poor,” he said.

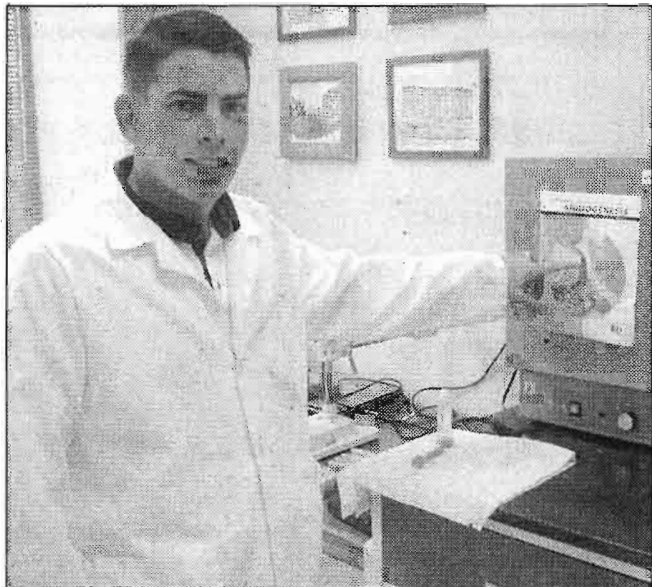
Instead, Pfister became a physics professor and invents products on the side. He spoke about his experiences at a workshop at the Hershey Center for Applied Research this week.

Opened a year ago, the research park provides life sciences and high-tech companies access to business and research resources throughout central Pennsylvania. The workshop was designed to provide information to faculty entrepreneurs, like Pfister, and company representatives on how to get their inventions to the market quickly.

“The path to commercialization is one that’s exciting but also very complicated,” said HCAR executive Director Laura Butcher.

Pfister is an associate professor of physics, George Wesley Pedlow Chair in Pedagogy at Dickinson College in Carlisle. Over the years, he has invented many products. He has designed and built a dental device that permits the non-destructive removal of temporary crowns and bridges.

Another speaker, Erin Byrne, president and CEO of Lepton Technologies, Lancaster County, explained the importance of companies working closely with colleges to design and develop products for the market.



Chris Sholly / Lebanon Daily News

Lynn W. Maines, vice president of research and business affairs of Apogee Biotechnology Corp., Hershey, explains the research his company is working on in a lab at the Hershey Center for Applied Research in Derry Township. The company is the first private tenant in the year-old center, which is trying to attract similar companies.

She said it’s important to identify prospective faculty partners.

“Once you get in touch with a professor, you make your pitch ... and on the other side, you want to hear back from the professor — what are their interests, and where do they think they can help you out,” she said.

Butcher said the workshop is one way HCAR can help local entrepreneurs.

“We’re looking to attract companies at all stages of the business life cycle to collaborate with the Penn State College of Medicine and the other institutions of higher education in this region,” she said.

HCAR houses Apogee Biotechnology Corp., a spin-off of the Penn State College of Medicine’s Department of Pharmacology. The first private-company tenant, Apogee is developing chemical compounds that will inhibit the activities of an enzyme known to drive cell proliferation

and inflammation. The research is expected to benefit patients with cancer, diabetic retinopathy, inflammatory bowel disease, arthritis and atherosclerosis.

Other tenants are Penn State College of Medicine Department of Pharmacology and the Penn State Hershey Office of Technology Development.

The three-story, 80,448-square-foot building is the first of 12 planned for the site.

Butcher said the second building will be 100,000 square feet. The historic farmhouse that sits just north of the main building will become a coffeehouse, which is expected to open in July.

HCAR is owned by Wexford Science and Technology, which has research parks across the nation. The center is located on a 165-acre campus just west of Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and the College of Medicine.

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