

*Innovation Valley (www.ivalley.org)***Merrimack Valley's Global Summit on Innovation Networking and Green Chemistry**

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We propose a global summit orchestrated in the Merrimack Valley to match two cutting-edge trends key to the region's future.

These are, firstly, Innovation Networking, an emerging business model that promotes sharing of intellectual property amongst diverse sectors, and, secondly, Green Chemistry, a rapidly growing industrial practice that eliminates the use of hazardous materials in manufacturing. The goal is to establish the region as a nexus for advanced and environmentally sustainable industrial research, and in the process help reverse a half-century-long problem. While the knowledge-oriented economy revitalized Greater Boston, it has failed to spread to "gateway cities," such as Lawrence and Haverhill. To alleviate this we need to harness not only new technologies, but also new methods for information sharing.

The lingering economic problems for the region are illustrated in a highly touted report by MassINC and the Brookings Institute, entitled "Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Lessons Learned and Agenda for Renewal." The report states:

"The Gateway Cities have continued to slip in importance in relation to Boston on key measures of economic performance... Gateway Cities continue to struggle with deindustrialization, and have not yet found a niche in the specialized knowledge-oriented economy that has revitalized the Boston area in recent decades."

It is precisely the objective of this summit to address the challenges outlined in the Gateway Cities report

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and to help the region find it's "niche in the specialized knowledge-oriented economy."

**What is Innovation Networking?**

In innovation networks, diverse businesses and research centers collaborate on ideas, technologies and market objectives to develop products and services that were not possible using in-house inventions and insular intellectual property perspectives. There is mounting adaptation of this methodology as the "do it alone" approach is rapidly dying and become increasingly ineffectual.



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The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at [www.ivalley.org](http://www.ivalley.org).

A clear example of its appeal can be seen in survey data from the Innovate Forum. This study showed that "75% of CEOs across industries now view external collaboration as indispensable to innovation..." and, further, that "only 17% of global CEOs even mention R&D when listing their sources of innovation," thus, underscoring the value of collaboration beyond traditional corridors.

A prominent player in the field from which we can learn is The Santa Fe Institute (SFI). They have developed a model for business networking that has the participation of some of the largest and most progressive companies in the world. According to a recent Forrester Research report, "The Santa Fe Institute Business Network (SFI) epitomizes a key role in Innovation Networks: the broker. By bringing together world-class researchers from fields as diverse as particle physics and economics, SFI helps businesses like Boeing, Cisco Systems, and Honda find peers with expert advice on new product ideas, forge bonds with new collaborators for intercompany projects, and design more robust organizations."

And closer to home, we are seeing Innovation Networking put to practice at the 2007 Bio International Convention to be held in Boston. The conference will feature an extensive innovation networking agenda. Participants can use a web portal to identify possible partner companies, and invite executives, scientists, and investors to hear their ideas during 30-minute side sessions.

**Innovation Networking and Green Chemistry Integration**

Innovation Networking is a great strategy to help jumpstart a Green Chemistry industry in the Merrimack Valley. In fact, Green Chemistry is practically the poster child for Innovation Networking. It sits squarely within the intersections of the chemical, pharmaceutical, and "green technology" industries. It is a multi-disciplinary practice that promises to help grow high-tech and environmentally responsible enterprises in the Commonwealth.

**Merrimack Valley Has The Expertise and Early Adopters**

For more than a year, many stakeholders from the business, government, academia and civic communities across the Merrimack Valley have been volunteering to establish a Green Chemistry industry in the region. At the cornerstone of our effort is Dr. John Warner, director, Center for Green Chemistry, and professor, Plastics Engineering, at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell. Dr. Warner is a global authority of the Green Chemistry science.

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He is widely recognized as the founder of the field since its inception in the 1990s, and is today its most sought after consultant. Dr. Warner initiated the nation's first PhD program in Green Chemistry at the University of Massachusetts.

He was influential in creating the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge for recognition of nontoxic chemical technologies. And, additionally, he helped craft House Bill H.R. 1215, The Green Chemistry Research and Development Act of 2006. That bill has earmarked money for research into clean chemistry for industry.

We are fortunate to have Dr. Warner as a native son. His presence here helps to establish the Merrimack Valley as a home for innovative and environmentally responsible industrial research.

**Summit Vision**

Our vision is for a summit in the fall of 2007 to launch the Green Chemistry industry in the Merrimack Valley. Opinion leaders from diverse fields such as life sciences, renewable energy, and finance will share ideas on business cases that cut across their domains. The central figure in the event will be Dr. John Warner, who will present his vision for a Green Chemistry Institute and industry in the Merrimack Valley, as well as help to formulate business cases.

It is our intention to invite Governor Patrick to kickoff the event with a keynote address on his plans for renewable energy and environmentally smart industries in Massachusetts.

Representatives from the Santa Fe Institute will be invited to provide an overview on their Business Network model, as well as guide brainstorming sessions comprised of leaders from diverse fields. A teleconference will be featured to include experts from around the world. The end product will be the launch of Innovation Networking for the region that will help jumpstart Green Chemistry and other advanced industries. We hope that when MassINC does its next study, the cities of the Merrimack Valley will be seen as "gateways" to the future.

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