New Partnership Creates Opportunities for Research and Development

Posted on Thursday 2nd June 2011

The University of Birmingham has set up the Poynting Institute which aims to generate novel and innovative solutions to real world problems for both industry and government. The first partner is the high tech science, technology and engineering company, QinetiQ.

l – r: University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor Professor David Eastwood, Professor Nigel Weatherill, University of Birmingham, Jon Salkeld, QinetiQ, Professor Paul Cannon, QinetiQ and Director of the Poynting Institute, Leo Quinn, QinetiQ.

The new institute aims to provide the infrastructure and facilities to bridge the gap between research and technology and will undertake solution targeted research in key areas of mutual interest which explore ideas and concepts with commercial and government relevance.

Employees from QinetiQ are being seconded to the Institute to work with University scientists and engineers. The first two themes of research are space weather and autonomy. Space weather can affect a number of high tech systems including wireless systems, power lines and satellites as well as, for example, the global positioning system (GPS). The Poynting team is exploring techniques to mitigate wireless signal distortion introduced by space weather. The autonomy researchers are exploring autonomous robots and vehicles for a wide range of air and land applications.

Professor Paul Cannon, the Institute's Director and Senior Fellow at QinetiQ, said, 'QinetiQ is delighted to be working with the University of Birmingham and to be benefiting from the expertise that it has to offer. Together we cover the full range of technology development from basic research through to equipment prototype and service provision.'

Professor Nigel Weatherill, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the University's College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, said, 'The initiative represents a new and innovative model for collaboration between higher education and industry. Working in the area of common expertise the commercial focus of QinetiQ will influence the programme of basic research at the University. Working together through staff secondments both partners will use the collaboration to help meet their own strategic goals.'

Notes to Editors

1. Photographs taken at signing of the memorandum between the University of Birmingham and QinetiQ are available as follows:
a) l – r: Professor Nigel Weatherill, University of Birmingham, University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor Professor David Eastwood and Chief Executive of QinetiQ Leo Quinn.
b) l – r: University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor Professor David Eastwood, Professor Nigel Weatherill, University of Birmingham, Jon Salkeld, QinetiQ, Professor Paul Cannon, QinetiQ and Director of the Poynting Institute, Leo Quinn, QinetiQ.
2. The University of Birmingham's College of Engineering and Physical Sciences plays a significant role in creating new knowledge, training new generations of engineers and scientists, and interfacing with industry. It comprises nine Schools: Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials and Physics and Astronomy.
3. A FTSE250 company, QinetiQ uses its domain knowledge to provide technical support and know-how to customers in the global aerospace, defence and security markets. QinetiQ's unique position enables it to be a trusted partner to government organisations, predominantly in the UK and the US, including defence departments, intelligence services and security agencies.
4. The Institute is named after John Henry Poynting (1852-1914) who became the first Mason Professor of Physics at the Mason Science College, Birmingham (later the University of Birmingham) in 1880 until his death in 1914. He was the developer and eponym of the Poynting vector, which describes the direction and magnitude of light and radio energy flow and is used in the Poynting theorem, a statement about energy conservation for electric and magnetic fields.

For further information
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