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Institute settles into new office at Purdue

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Two years after beginning operations the Alfred Mann Institute for Biomedical Development at Purdue University has moved into its permanent office.

The nonprofit institute is now housed in the Discovery Learning Research Center with four times the space of its previous Discovery Park location.

The institute, called AMIPurdue, was established through a \$100 million endowment from the Alfred Mann Foundation for Biomedical Engineering to help commercialize life science technologies developed at Purdue by providing startup funds.

"This is about the life-saving technologies and sciences that can be used to help people," said John C. Hertig, AMIPurdue executive director. "Our job is to get it out of the laboratory, to help it cross the valley of death."

The "valley of death" is what Hertig and managing director Steve Mogensen call the difficult steps to toward commercialization. Without funding and other business help, potentially life-changing technologies could die in a faculty's lab after years of research and little notice.

AMIPurdue does not fund research but provides footing for the next step, such as money to develop a prototype or an animal study.

Since January 2008, AMIPurdue has invested more than \$2.5 million in direct expenses involving nine Purdue technologies. It also provided more than \$800,000 to intellectual property filings, marketing and other business planning costs.

Currently, AMIPurdue is funding seven technologies, including an intraocular pressure monitoring system for glaucoma patients and synthetic proteoglycan compound to enhance healing and inhibit scarring in surgical wounds.

Tuesday, Hertig was reviewing a sports health-related proposal he expected would receive funding this month.

Funding -- from \$100,000 to more than \$1 million -- can be available in just a few weeks after a faculty member talks over a plan with the AMIPurdue team.

The three-person staff that runs the institute is always looking for biomedical ideas being designed by researchers and faculty.

"We fish," Hertig said. "We meet a lot of people on the campus. If we see something to help mankind, we ask them to come talk with us."

Even with the new office, Mogensen said the staff will stay small, allowing for a low overhead costs. The extra room will allow for meetings.

"We want people to tell us what they are doing," he said. "If it is in life science, we'd love to know about it."
