

**House Committee on Education and the Workforce
Innovation Forum**

H. Edward Seidel

Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation, University of Illinois System

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Thank you for inviting me to speak today on behalf of the University of Illinois System and the Discovery Partners Institute, or DPI. As a land-grant institution, it is our mission to educate the citizens of our state. We also aim to retain and attract the best student and corporate talent. Innovation is key, and is vital to the success of today's companies. It drives the national economy as its largest engine of economic development and prosperity.

DPI is our new initiative that deeply intertwines research, education, and innovation in a new vision for the land-grant university in the 21st century. Achieving this vision rests on the alignment of higher education with industry-leading companies to accelerate the pace of innovation and create a more robust workforce. DPI will bring together the brightest minds from our best universities, companies and world-renowned international partners to develop technologies that change industries, connect entrepreneurs with venture capital, and spur economic growth throughout our state and beyond. DPI has already gained broad support, with endorsements from both our governor and the mayor of Chicago, and a \$500 million capital appropriation from the legislature.

Illinois is an international innovation leader already. DPI's new model will enable us to do even better. It will be led by the University of Illinois System, which has campuses in Urbana-

Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield. Northwestern and the University of Chicago are founding partners, while Tel Aviv University, Israel's largest university and a global leader in entrepreneurship, is our first international partner.

Top faculty from such great institutions will gather at DPI to conduct research and teach students side-by-side with corporations, tackling grand challenges and finding breakthroughs that improve society. Themes will include computing & data, food & agriculture, health & wellness, and environment & water, with an emphasis on maximizing impact on culture & society, public policy, education & workforce, and entrepreneurship & technology commercialization.

Academic partnerships have been around for decades, but DPI's marriage of top researchers and students from multiple universities, with businesses of all sizes, and entrepreneurs, is the game-changing combination. DPI will be an environment where companies leverage immense faculty and student brainpower to fuel their innovation and development; a setting where students help tackle industry's biggest challenges before they even graduate; an atmosphere where faculty are inspired to do cutting-edge research and develop innovations that will improve the way we all live and work.

DPI will be one of the nation's largest collaborative environments for innovation. Home to hundreds of faculty, thousands of students and dozens of business partners, it will be just one hub of the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN), which will transmit innovation to every corner of the state. Together, DPI and IIN will be the University of Illinois System's new realization of the

land-grant mission for the 21st century, and will drive innovation and economic growth across our state. Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.