

# Arkansas Business Weekly Report

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## Technology

# Arkansas, FDA to Join In Nanotech Research

The state of Arkansas was scheduled to sign an agreement on Friday with the **U.S. Food & Drug Administration** setting up a nanotechnology research program between the FDA's **National Center for Toxicological Research** in Jefferson and the state's five research universities.

Gov. **Mike Beebe** and FDA Commissioner **Margaret Hamburg** will sign a memorandum of understanding creating a **Virtual Center of Excellence** in regulatory science pertaining to nanotechnology. Hamburg was in Little Rock last week to address the NCTR's **Global Summit on Regulatory Science & Innovation** at the Peabody Hotel, and was set to join Beebe, U.S. Sen. **Mark Pryor**, D-Ark., and U.S. Rep. **Mike Ross**, D-Ark., at NCTR's 40th anniversary celebration where the memo of understanding will be signed.

Under the agreement, the state's five research universities — the **University of Arkansas at Fayetteville**, the **University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences**, the **University of Arkansas at Little Rock**, the **University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff** and **Arkansas State University** — will work with NCTR to establish a nanotechnology collaborative research program dealing specifically with toxicity. In addition, UAMS will offer a master's degree and a certification program in regulatory science.



Margaret Hamburg

**Art Norris**, former NCTR deputy director, said many people were working with nanotechnology, but hardly anyone was looking at toxicity issues associated with it. The world-class toxicity labs at NCTR create an opportunity for collaboration between Arkansas and the FDA to have a real impact, he said.

Located at FDA's **Jefferson Labs** just north of White Hall, NCTR serves as the agency's primary research facility, supporting all FDA product centers nationwide and collaborating with scientists from across the world. Scientists from 14 countries were scheduled to attend NCTR's global summit last week.

Under the agreement with FDA, **Beebe** will select a working group of advisers to coordinate the research activities. According to Norris, who wrote the memo of understanding, the group's function will be to review policies associated with the collaborative research and look at barriers that prevent products created by the research from being commercialized.

"We could become a proving ground for new ideas in regulatory science with a national impact," he told *Arkansas Business*.

Norris said the agreement authorizes Beebe to appoint two group co-chairs, one of which must represent NCTR. Otherwise, group membership and term duration will rely on Beebe's discretion. The group will provide the state with annual assessments on research progress.

— Mark Carter