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For Immediate Release

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Society for Biological Engineering Advances “Web-Lab” Initiative

Universities and engineering societies join forces, with funding from the United Engineering Foundation, to advance web-enabled experiments and enhance undergraduate education

NEW YORK, October 26, 2010 – The Society for Biological Engineering (SBE) of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers recently launched a Web-Lab initiative that aims to web-enable laboratory experiments. Working under a grant from the United Engineering Foundation and in cooperation with several universities and engineering societies, the initiative is developing tools that could enhance undergraduate education. The long-term goal is to provide more students with access to the best modern laboratory experience, while reducing the cost per student for the delivery of state-of-the-art laboratory exercises.

According to Miriam Cortes-Caminero, SBE’s executive director, “These web-based labs could provide a high-quality lab experience through a central facility, using remotely-operated lab equipment that students could access and control in real-time over the web.” She explained, “Web-based labs could improve many undergraduates’ education and better prepare them for the world of work, by familiarizing them with the latest tools and providing them with up-to-date skills.”

In cooperation with the Golden LEAF Biomanufacturing Training and Education Center at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, SBE is designing, organizing and offering a pilot program later this semester for a web-enabled laboratory. The first roll-out will involve the remote operation and control of a bioreactor to cultivate bacteria to produce green fluorescent protein. The Web-Lab activity will focus on the feasibility of remotely monitoring the modeling of microbial growth and product production.

Schools supporting the SBE Web-Lab initiative are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the University of Arizona, San Jose State University, North Carolina State University, and North Carolina Central University. Supporting engineering organizations are ASME International, TMS (The Minerals, Metals and Materials Society), and the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society.

Beyond its Web-Lab initiative, SBE has brought together a consortium of companies to pursue research to better determine Chinese hamster ovary genetic data, which is limited despite this cell line's importance to biological products. Additionally, SBE holds conferences on bioengineering and nanotechnology, accelerating biopharmaceutical development, stem cell engineering, and biomolecular engineering.

About SBE:

Established in 2004, the Society for Biological Engineering is a technological community for engineers and applied scientists integrating biology with engineering. Members of SBE come from a broad spectrum of industries and disciplines and share in SBE's mission of realizing the benefits of bioprocessing, biomedical and biomolecular applications. <http://bio.aiche.org>.

About AIChE:

AIChE, founded in 1908, is a professional association of 40,000 chemical engineers in 92 countries. Its members work in corporations, universities and government using their knowledge of chemical processes to develop safe and useful products for the benefit of society. For more information, please go to www.aiche.org.

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