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Louisiana Technology Council awards

Pennington Researcher Named the "2011 University Technology Leader of the Year"

Dr. Kenneth Eilertsen is an Associate Professor of Epigenetics and Nuclear Reprogramming at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge. He also serves as President and cofounder of Nupotential, Inc. and has over 20 years of cell reprogramming experience. He has created NuPotential's internationally recognized core cell reprogramming technologies. His industrial experience includes a senior research role at Johnson and Johnson as well as his tenure as Vice President of Research at Infigen, Inc. (DeForest, WI). At Infigen, Dr. Eilertsen lead all research efforts as well as managed the company's contract diagnostic division (Genmark) restoring it to profitability in less than a year. Infigen is known for cloning the second mammal by nuclear transfer.

In 2004, Dr. Eilertsen, co-founded NuPotential, Inc. to develop and market cell reprogramming technology in partnership with the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. **NuPotential's cell reprogramming process generates new living cells, called pluripotent cells, which have the same capabilities as embryonic stem cells. However, the pluripotent cells use a patient's own adult cells, such as skin cells, eliminating the potential of patient rejection that can occur with embryonic stem cells or other foreign cells. In addition, NuPotential's technology avoids the ethical issues associated with embryonic stem cells.**

"I am honored to be the recipient of this award, however it really represents the hard work and dedication of NuPotential's employees, and the commitment to commercializing scientific discoveries by Pennington Biomedical Research Center senior administration and Louisiana's investment community," said Dr. Eilertsen.

NuPotential's process is being developed for use in therapies to reverse the debilitating effects of diabetes, stroke, heart disease, Parkinson's disease and other chronic conditions, and in drug discovery. Since its founding, NuPotential has created a growing patent estate around its proprietary cell reprogramming technology. In 2009, it was selected as one of the top ten firms to present at the 2009 World's Best Technologies

Showcase in Dallas, Texas.

"We salute Dr. Eilertsen on the announcement of this prestigious award for groundbreaking work in cell regeneration and programming. This astounding research has demonstrated and validates the commercial value of the research done by Dr. Eilertsen," said Steven Heymsfield, executive director of Pennington Biomedical. NuPotential, Inc. has received over $3 million in venture funding from the La 1 Fund, Themelios and the Louisiana Tech Park Fund, and captured $2.3 million in National Institute of Health grant funding. Dr. Eilertsen has been a member of the faculty of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center since 2004.

Governor Bobby Jindal highlighted Louisiana's recent gains in attracting high-tech businesses to the state through new ethics reform, tax incentives, and workforce development programs. He said Louisiana must continue to focus on knowledge-based economy to accelerate economic development.

He announced the following Louisiana Technology Council awards:

- Rising Stars of the Year-Twin Engine Labs, Shreveport;
- Innovator of the Year: Touch Studios, New Orleans; and Amedisys, Baton Rouge;
- University Technology Leader of the Year: Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Dr. Kenneth J. Eilertsen, Professor, Baton Rouge
- Technology Company of the Year: AXI Education Solutions, Mandeville

For more information on Pennington Biomedical's research, programs and clinical trials, go to www.pbrc.edu.