

Press release / Datganiad i'r wasg

Date: Wednesday 28 November 2007

Title: **Senedd Launch for Brain Science Institute**

A major research institute in Wales for 'brain sciences' is being launched at the National Assembly for Wales's Senedd Building in Cardiff on Wednesday, 28 November.

The Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience (WICN), involving Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea Universities, draws together existing cognitive neuroscience research excellence.

By combining resources and expertise, and sharing the costs of expensive technology, WICN enables Welsh cognitive neuroscience research to compete with the best institutions in the world for research funding.

It will also offer potential opportunities to take economic and commercial advantage of emerging developments in this field, and it will work actively with industry and the healthcare sector to this end.

WICN is receiving Welsh Assembly Government support totalling £5.17 million through HEFCW's Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund.

In the first year alone, more than a dozen world-class researchers have been appointed to Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea universities. Meanwhile, academics and researchers at the three Centres have begun to collaborate on dozens of research projects.

Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice-Chancellor of Bangor University, said: "WICN is an organization of which Wales can be truly proud. The Institute boasts some of the

foremost researchers in neuroscience in the world. The results of neuroscience research will feed into health services in Wales, will be shared internationally, and can bring economic and employment benefits."

Professor Adrian Burgess, head of Psychology at Swansea University, said: "The new Institute provides a framework in which to ensure sustainable Cognitive Neuroscience research collaboration within Wales and with the development of a cross-university graduate school we will be able to provide future students with an innovative education that can compete with the best available anywhere in the world here in Wales."

Professor Dylan Jones, head of Psychology at Cardiff University, said: "It has been gratifying to see the willingness of the Welsh Assembly Government to support - through the WICN collaborative venture - already strong departments in order that they can compete effectively in their research with the very best in the world. At the same time, the work of WICN will be projected onto the local scene, providing opportunities for the public to learn about key advances in our understanding of the brain."

Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, said: "I am delighted that we are supporting this excellent research collaboration. The Institute for Cognitive Neuroscience will place Wales at the heart of the research community in this very significant area of work. The Institute will achieve world-class research collaboratively, in line with the approach which we have encouraged in our *Reaching Higher* strategy."

Ends

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Notes to Editors

The launch will take place at 5.30 pm at the Oriel in the National Assembly's Senedd Building in Cardiff Bay on Wednesday, 28 November 2007.

Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience

Support of £5.17 million was awarded in 2006 to Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea Universities to establish the multi-centre Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. The Institute is drawing together existing cognitive neuroscience research excellence. Combining resources and expertise, and sharing the costs of expensive technology, the Institute is enabling Welsh cognitive neuroscience research to compete with the best institutions in the world. It will offer potential opportunities to take economic and commercial advantage of emerging developments in this field, and the Institute will actively work with industry and the healthcare sector to this end.

Cognitive neuroscience has emerged in the past decade as one of the most significant areas of contemporary science. This fast moving scientific discipline is beginning to transform the understanding of normal and damaged brain function, as well as to inform the treatment of brain impairments such as head injury, stroke, dementia and schizophrenia.

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund support has been used to establish a unified management structure and research strategy for the Institute, as well as to draw together existing research groups. The funding has also built on this combined expertise through the appointment of five new Chairs, and additional research staff with associated technical support. The ongoing development of the Institute will include the establishment of a joint Wales Graduate School in Cognitive Neuroscience, in order to develop and nurture new research talent. Through these developments, the Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience aims to deliver an increased level of research income at the three institutions.

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund was launched in July 2002 to support the reshaping of the Welsh Higher Education Sector in the interests of achieving major performance gains and enhanced competitiveness. Several partnerships were supported in this first phase of the fund including the merger of Cardiff University and the University of Wales College of Medicine.

In June 2004, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning reiterated the Welsh Assembly Government's continuing commitment to pursuing reconfiguration and collaboration as a means of securing a robust, dynamic and competitive higher education sector in Wales. HEFCW launched a second phase of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund in July 2004 with the aim of encouraging proposals for well-found mergers, clusters and networks of excellence and the rationalisation of provision between institutions.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and
- higher education courses at further education colleges.

HEFCW is also responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.