Raven Industries to open center at SDSU Research Park

BROOKINGS, S.D. – Aug. 19, 2013 - Raven Industries, South Dakota State University and the Research Park at South Dakota State University have announced the formation of a new partnership focused on research and development coupled with student experiential learning. The collaboration among the three entities, which will concentrate on precision agriculture and associated workforce development, will be located in the Research Park at SDSU.

Precision agriculture is a commercialized field management approach that uses applied science such as satellite technology, computerized steering, advanced planter control systems, variable rate applications of seeds and chemicals, and more to help growers and custom applicators become more efficient in their operations, while increasing yields. Precision agriculture optimizes management of every location in a field in order to enhance returns and maximize use of resources.

“With precision agriculture, you’re really farming by the square meter, rather than quarter sections,” said Barry Dunn, dean of the College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences. “That’s going to make us better stewards of the land and increase profitability for growers.”

Dunn also noted the quality of the university’s faculty and the value ongoing work in plant and soil sciences, geographical information science, computer science and decision analytics, computational science and statistics, and engineering will bring to the partnership. In addition, the university is adding a new field of study to support precision agriculture.

Dan Rykhus, president and CEO of Raven Industries Inc., highlighted a recent project involving SDSU faculty and students working with Raven team members to design a multihybrid planter control solution. “The opportunity to collaborate in areas associated with our core businesses will enhance our growth as an organization and develop a stronger cohesion between Raven and the university as we jointly address industry challenges,” he said.

Raven will offer student interns hands-on experience in highly technical areas, with the possibility of full-time positions following graduation.

“Raven’s Center in the Research Park is a win-win. Our engineering students will contribute directly to the development of advanced technology within a business environment. This is unique and unmatched,” said Lewis Brown, dean of the Jerome J. Lohr College of Engineering at SDSU.

Brown also said that partnering with companies like Raven will enhance economic growth in the state and region by building on the university’s discovery science to drive commercialization and create new products, services and jobs.

Jay Bender, chair of the Growth Partnership said, “Public/private partnerships like the one with Raven Industries are what the Research Park at SDSU is about—using knowledge generated in a collaborative setting as a catalyst for economic development, and in a very real sense, transforming people’s lives by moving cutting-edge innovations out of the labs and into the marketplace.” The Growth Partnership is a nonprofit organization that oversees the Research Park.
“We are excited to connect industry-leading faculty and top-caliber students from a renowned land-grant university with a global technology leader,” said Matt Burkhart, vice president and general manager of the Raven Applied Technology Division. “This is a great opportunity to help solve the challenge of feeding the world, and at the same time support South Dakota's higher education while proliferating the Silicon Prairie.”

Raven was founded in Sioux Falls in 1956 as a manufacturer of high-altitude research balloons to meet challenges faced by the country’s nascent space program. Today, Raven continues to address contemporary challenges through innovative high-quality, high-value products in areas of safety, global food production, energy independence and resource preservation.

The company currently comprises three divisions:

- Applied Technology Division, which provides electronic precision agriculture solutions and information management tools designed to reduce operating costs and improve yields for the global agriculture market;
- Engineered Films Division, which manufacturers high-performance plastic films and sheeting and geomembranes that provide critical protection of environmental resources through containment linings and coverings in the energy, agriculture, construction, environmental and industrial markets; and
- Aerostar Division, a world leader in the design and manufacture of aerospace, surveillance technology, electronics and specialty sewn products, including tethered aerostats used in research, communications, surveillance and intelligence gathering by both government and commercial entities.

**About Raven Industries**

Since 1956, Raven Industries has designed and manufactured high-quality, high-value technical products. Raven is publicly traded on NASDAQ (RAVN) and has earned an international reputation for innovation, product quality, high performance and unmatched service. Raven’s purpose is to solve great challenges in areas of safety, feeding the world, energy independence and resource preservation. To realize this purpose, we utilize our strengths in engineering, manufacturing and technological innovation to serve the precision agriculture, high performance specialty films, aerospace and electronic manufacturing services markets. Visit www.RavenInd.com for more information.

**About South Dakota State University**

Founded in 1881, South Dakota State University is the state’s Morrill Act land-grant institution as well as its largest, most comprehensive school of higher education. SDSU confers degrees from six different colleges representing more than 175 majors, minors and specializations. The institution also offers 29 master’s degree programs, 12 Ph.D. and two professional programs.

The work of the university is carried out on a residential campus in Brookings, at sites in Sioux Falls, Pierre and Rapid City, and through SDSU Extension offices and Agricultural Experiment Station research sites across the state.

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