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Partnership

Biofuels Center Grows In West

Universities, government, and industry will advance biomass conversion

[Michael McCoy](#)

Three universities, a government laboratory, and several companies are joining forces in Colorado to create what organizers hope will be a major player in the emerging field of converting biomass into fuels and other products.



DOE/NREL/Warren Gretz

C2B2 members will have access to NREL's fermenters in Golden, Colo.

The Colorado Center for Biorefining & Biofuels, or C2B2, at press time was scheduled to be announced on March 19 in Denver by Colorado political leaders and university officials. It combines the biofuels and biorefining expertise of the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, the Colorado School of Mines, and the Colorado-based [National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#) (NREL). Founding corporate members include [Dow Chemical](#), [Chevron](#), [ConocoPhillips](#), and [Shell](#).

The center is the latest in a spate of academic-industry collaborations being formed to pursue alternative energy and raw materials. [BP](#) upped the ante for such projects in February when it announced a \$500 million institute that will include the University of California, Berkeley, and other partners.

[Alan W. Weimer](#), C2B2's executive director and a chemical and biological engineering professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, says the Colorado center will offer inter-institutional collaborations that are unmatched in the R&D landscape. He acknowledges that the BP institute involves an impressive amount of money but argues that it can't match the breadth and depth of the C2B2 research team.

Details of the center took nine months to hammer out, Weimer says. Large company members like Dow and Shell will pay a \$50,000 annual fee that provides royalty-free, nonexclusive rights to jointly developed intellectual property. Companies also can sponsor research in exchange for exclusive rights. Weimer anticipates combined funding to reach \$10 million to \$20 million within three years.

Charles T. Kresge, a Dow vice president of R&D, says his company is joining to diversify its chemical feedstock slate. His goal is to develop new raw materials that experience less price volatility than traditional ones and that offer new functionality stemming from their biomass origins. "We have an opportunity to take a seat at the table of what we hope will be a world-renowned center," he says.

Chevron's technology ventures subsidiary notes that membership in C2B2 will strengthen an alliance it formed with NREL last October to develop processes for converting cellulosic biomass into fuels.

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