

ABB-Royal Academy of Engineering Research Chair launched at Imperial College

New research programme into enhancing efficiency in the process and power generation industry

For immediate release
Tuesday 27 February 2006

A new research chair, at Imperial College London, sponsored by engineering company ABB under the Royal Academy of Engineering Research Chairs Scheme, is announced today.

Professor Nina Thornhill is to be appointed to a new research chair in Process Automation at the College when she takes up the post in April 2007. She will lead a research programme spanning five years focusing on enhancing productivity and efficiency in the process and power generation industries.

The approach adopted by this programme is distinguished by its focus on improving efficiency in the huge base of currently installed process plant. This is achieved by optimizing the operation of process equipment using various techniques including the prediction, detection, diagnosis and elimination of the root causes of process inefficiencies.

The work will be undertaken by Imperial researchers, industrial research engineers on secondment and PhD students sharing their time between Imperial and industrial placements with collaborating companies.

Professor Thornhill is delighted with the appointment. She says: "A key aim of the research is to ensure that technical solutions for specific case studies evolve into best practices in automation to reduce energy consumption, boost productivity and reduce wastes."

Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Principal of the Faculty of Engineering at Imperial College says: "ABB is the perfect partner for this research programme. Imperial College has a long-standing relationship with ABB and the research chair will extend and consolidate this collaboration."

Peter Terwiesch, ABB's Chief Technology Officer adds: "Research and development is a vital source of ABB's technology leadership. Together with our nine research centres, over 6000 scientists and developers and more than 70 university collaborations across the world, sponsoring this research chair will play a vital role in developing unique technologies that will make our customers more competitive, whilst minimising environmental impact."

Rob Barrett, Manager, Research Support, at The Royal Academy of Engineering, adds: "We are delighted to appoint Nina Thornhill who is the second female Research Chair funded by the Academy. This exemplifies our drive to support women in science and engineering and Nina brings a wealth of experience in industry to this academic appointment."

The appointment will be formally announced at the annual meeting of the Imperial – ABB Strategic Alliance meeting on Tuesday 27 February.

Notes to Editors:

About Imperial College London:

Rated as the world's ninth best university in the 2006 *Times Higher Education Supplement* University Rankings, Imperial College London is a science-based institution with a reputation for excellence in teaching and research that attracts 11,500 students and 6,000 staff of the highest international quality.

Innovative research at the College explores the interface between science, medicine, engineering and management and delivers practical solutions that improve quality of life and the environment - underpinned by a dynamic enterprise culture.

With 62 Fellows of the Royal Society among our current academic staff and distinguished past members of the College including 14 Nobel Laureates and two Fields Medallists, Imperial's contribution to society has been immense. Inventions and innovations include the discovery of penicillin, the development of holography and the foundations of fibre optics. This commitment to the application of our research for the benefit of all continues today with current focuses including interdisciplinary collaborations to tackle climate change and mathematical modelling to predict and control the spread of infectious diseases.

The College's 100 years of living science will be celebrated throughout 2007 with a range of events to mark the Centenary of the signing of Imperial's founding charter on 8 July 1907.

Website: www.imperial.ac.uk

About ABB:

ABB (www.abb.com) is a leader in power and automation technologies that enable utility and industry customers to improve their performance while lowering environmental impact. The ABB Group of companies operates in around 100 countries and employs about 107,000 people.

About The Royal Academy of Engineering:

Founded in 1976, The Royal Academy of Engineering promotes the engineering and technological welfare of the country. As a national academy, it provides independent and impartial advice to Government; work to secure the next generation of engineers; and it provides a voice for Britain's engineering community.

For more information about the Royal Academy of Engineering Schemes for Engineers in Research and Development, please visit <http://www.raeng.org.uk/research/researcher/chairs/default.htm>