

## A Conversation with John “Jack” Harris *Chair of the IPRT Industrial Advisory Board*

On October 23-24, 2003, the IPRT Industrial Advisory Board held its fall meeting. This meeting marked the four-year anniversary of the group, which is chartered to provide IPRT advice in formulating mid- to long-term research plans and directions.

While at IPRT for the meeting, John “Jack” Harris, a charter member and current chair of the IAB, sat down for an interview to reflect on the successes of the IAB since its inception. Harris began by saying that the IAB has developed a genuine appreciation for IPRT’s “uniqueness” within the university setting. Harris says he knows of no other university that has an entity that fosters interdisciplinary research as successfully at IPRT. “It’s when you bring many disciplines together that you make progress,” says Harris.

Harris points to progress on many fronts when he talks about the IAB’s efforts on behalf of IPRT. At each IAB meeting members interact with IPRT centers through tours and talks with center scientists and students. Harris says his company in particular has had positive interactions with the Center for Nondestructive Evaluation, which he says has led United Technologies/Pratt & Whitney to become a full supporter of IPRT. “Many of the companies represented on the IAB are now sponsoring research and recruiting graduates at ISU,” adds Harris, who also points to the recently formed combinatorial chemistry initiative at ISU as a board success. He says the

concept for this initiative came directly from board members.

IAB members have science, technology and business backgrounds and represent many diverse disciplines in Fortune 500 and other companies around the nation. IAB companies include ALCOA, Inc.; General Mills; Deere & Company; General Motors Co.; Dow Corning Corp.; Ernst & Young; Micron Technology, Inc.; Rockwell Scientific; Delta Air Lines, Inc.; The Boeing Co.; The Gillette Co.; The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.; and United Technologies/Pratt & Whitney.

Harris says IAB members are helping IPRT develop a roadmap for the future. During each IAB meeting, members participate in a “Beyond the Headlights” segment in which they discuss things that could impact industry in the next 10 years. Harris says this time frame is important because of today’s pressure to bring products to market, which results in industry’s research focus usually being no farther out than three years. He says he expects to see industry turning more and more to universities and organizations such as IPRT to provide the basic research it no longer conducts in house. “The IAB can make an impact in this area by helping IPRT bring focus to the key research areas in which industry has needs,” says Harris.

Harris is looking forward to the IAB’s spring meeting at which members will



discuss IPRT’s strategic planning activities. He says he believes this plan will ultimately help IPRT determine where it wants to go in the 5-10 year time frame. And once it knows, he says the IAB “will help it get there.”