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UNH Celebrates Opening of New Genomics Center

By [Sharon Keeler](#)
UNH News Bureau
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October 18, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire today celebrated the opening of its new Hubbard Center for Genome Studies. Part of the university's entrepreneurial campus, it will be devoted to understanding the structure and function of genomes from across the spectrum of life.

It is named in honor of the university's greatest benefactors, Oliver '21, Austin '25 and Leslie '27 Hubbard, whose philanthropy, which spans decades, continues to have a major impact on the university.

Genomics is a new area of biology, enabled through the large-scale DNA sequencing efforts of many public and private organizations. It takes a holistic approach to molecular biology and evolution by studying the complete genome and its protein expression patterns.

"The Hubbard brothers originally developed their business through selective breeding of poultry to produce better genetic lines for the industry," says Andrew Rosenberg, dean of the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture. "Genomics is a natural area for the family to invest in at UNH. They have done so much for our biological sciences programs over the years that it is with great pleasure that we open this new center as a tribute to their foresight as well as their philanthropy."

In addition to being an invaluable resource in advancing the research of faculty in the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture, the Hubbard Center for Genome Studies will provide an opportunity for students to learn genomic techniques using new technology. It also will encourage and support the development of New Hampshire's biotechnology industry, and play an

important role in informing the public about the societal and bioethical issues of genome research.

The center represents a major investment by the university, including three endowed professorships and 7,500 square feet of space in the new Environmental Technology Building. Thomas Kocher, UNH's Hortense Cavis Shepard Professor of Zoology and Genetics, and Kelley Thomas, associate professor of molecular biology and biochemistry at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, have been named the center's co-directors.

"Its special focus on aquatic and marine organisms -- with a particular emphasis on fishes -- provides the center with a unique identity among other university-based genome centers," Kocher explains. "It will allow UNH to develop world-class programs in comparative and environmental genomics to improve our understanding of evolutionary processes, human disease and environmental health."

Thomas, who joins the university in January, recently was named UNH's Hubbard Chair in the Biological Sciences. This chair was endowed by the Hubbard brothers to provide faculty and research support and to advance education and research in the biological sciences focusing on the fields of biotechnology and biochemistry.

In addition, William Gilbert, UNH Hamel Professor of Innovation and Technology, will assist the center in the area of bioinformatics. Bioinformatics is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on organizing the data that arises from research in genomics and biotechnology, and making it available in a format useful to scientists.

"The Hubbard family's generosity and vision has made it possible for us to move into genomic research in a significant way, transforming our capabilities in life sciences research and teaching," says David Hiley, UNH provost and vice president for academic affairs. "The Hubbard Genome Center and the recently recruited Hubbard Chair will draw together outstanding research already underway and move it to the next level. Our students will be the beneficiaries since they will have the opportunity to study and engage in research at the cutting edge."

In addition to Rosenberg, Kocher, Thomas and Gilbert, UNH President Joan Leitzel, Chairman of the USNH Board of Trustees John Lynch, John Hubbard (son of Austin), his wife Carol, and Hubbard family representative Charles DeGrandpre were on hand for the ceremony.

Svante Paabo, director of the Max-Planck-Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, gave the keynote seminar, "Comparative Genomics as a Means to Understanding Human Origins," as part of the celebration.

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