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EDUCATION

**\$15.5M NSF grant funding creation of mathematics institute at Brown U.**

By PBN Staff

PROVIDENCE - Brown University has been awarded \$15.5 million by the National Science Foundation to create a mathematics research institute that the university says will bolster the state's effort to build a "knowledge economy."

The Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics is expected to attract scholars from around world to develop advanced mathematics tools for uses such as Web search engines, secure communications and router optimization, Brown said in announcing the grant Thursday.

The NSF has funded seven other math institutes nationwide, but this is the first in New England, Brown said.

The institute, set to open in the fall 2011, will occupy two floors at 121 South Main St., an 11-story office building the university purchased in 2005 best known for being the site of Hemenway's Seafood Grille & Oyster Bar.

Brown said Jill Pipher, a mathematics professor at the university, has been selected as the institute's director.

"Mathematics has entered an age where powerful and readily available computational tools can transform the mathematical landscape at all levels of education," Pipher said. "ICERM's mission is to support and enhance the interaction of mathematics and computation and to solve new problems of critical importance and benefit to society."

The formation of the mathematics research institute comes months after Brown University installed a multi-million-dollar supercomputer that is assisting researchers around the state.

Brown said the NSF grant will fund the institute for five years, supporting a



COURTESY BROWN UNIVERSITY

WITH A \$15.5 MILLION grant from the National Science Foundation, Brown is creating the Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics at 121 South Main St. in Providence, where it will occupy two floors of the 11-story building.



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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

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full-time staff of five plus two full-time postdoctoral researchers each year and up to seven postdoctoral researchers each semester.

Already, institute staffers are partnering with hardware and software companies Google, IBM and Microsoft, Brown said.

Representatives from each company will sit on the institute's scientific advisory board so the firms will have a hand in designing research programs that could lead to technological advances in areas such as health care, communications, financial services and national security.

"Building better connections with these companies and the mathematics research community is an important goal of the institute," said Jan Hesthaven, professor of applied mathematics and an associate director at the institute.

Institute officials said they expect research advances to come from regular conferences and semester-long research programs. The institute expects to host as many as three dozen visiting faculty, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students to study and teach.

"In other words, we don't just want people to fly out here," Hesthaven said. "The idea is you come and spend a semester working with colleagues, participating in activities and forming new collaborations that continue after your stay."

U.S. Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that provides all federal funding for the National Science Foundation, said that "this project will not only advance mathematical sciences research and education in New England, but it will create jobs, attract leading mathematicians to the state, and make Rhode Island an important hub for the study of computational mathematics."

Gov. Donald L. Carcieri the creation of the institute "acknowledges the university's potential to shape the study and teaching of mathematics for the future." Both Reed and Carcieri had written letters in support of the application.

In addition to research, the institute will focus on training future scientists, Brown said. Institute officials plan to form an education board to oversee the undergraduate programs and graduate training and seek federal and foundation funding for education summits and other activities to improving mathematical science lessons at elementary and secondary schools.

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