

National Robotics Roundtable applauds President for robotics initiative

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Following President Obama's visit today to the National Robotics Engineering Center at Carnegie Mellon University, organizations constituting the National Robotics Roundtable applauded the administration's new manufacturing and robotics initiative and touted the role robotics and unmanned systems will play in creating jobs, strengthening the economy and ensuring American competitiveness in the global marketplace. The Administration's National Robotics Initiative is part of a \$500 million dollar project to boost America's high-tech manufacturing sector.

"We are pleased to welcome President Obama to Carnegie Mellon University today. The steps announced by the President will advance U.S. leadership, spur new industries and create new jobs," said Jared L. Cohon, president of Carnegie Mellon University. "Robotics is at the heart of the race for 21st century global economic leadership, as current and emerging robotic innovations will become increasingly vital to keeping us healthy, safe and prosperous in the next decade and beyond. Now, more than ever, it's important that industry, academia, and government work together to ensure our economic security and global competitiveness."

Robotics and unmanned systems have the potential to extend our human reach and expand our human capacity in a variety of industries, including manufacturing, defense and security, healthcare, transportation, agriculture and natural resource management. Meanwhile, robots are already at work addressing a number of our nation's most critical needs, including reinvigorating the U.S. manufacturing base, protecting our citizens and soldiers, preserving our environment, making surgery less invasive, exciting our kids about math and science, and enabling people with disabilities to lead normal, productive lives.

For example, U.S. doctors are currently utilizing sophisticated robotic devices to perform complex surgery using a minimally invasive approach, leading to a lower risk of infection, quicker recovery times and a shorter hospital stay. And a small wire basket manufacturer in Baltimore, MD that invested in robotics has seen its revenue increase six-fold, enabling them to expand (from 18 to 30 employees) and increase worker wages from \$6 to \$24 per hour. In an economy marked by importation, the company is exporting its products to the shores of China and 34 other countries.

"Investing in robotics is more than just money for research and development, it is a vehicle to transform American lives and revitalize the American economy," commented Helen Greiner, president and CEO of CyPhyWorks, president of the Robotics Technology Consortium, and co-founder of iRobot. "Indeed, we are at a critical juncture where we are seeing robotics transition from the laboratory to generate new businesses, create jobs and confront the important challenges facing our nation. The nation's robotics community is collectively poised to advance the technology and at the same time accelerate the transition of these technologies from the lab into the market."

A number of recent man-made and natural disasters have further exemplified the new and emerging uses for robotics and unmanned systems. In the aftermath of Japan's devastating earthquake and tsunami, robotic systems were used to inspect the damage at its Fukushima plant, a task too dangerous for humans. In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon explosion, unmanned underwater vehicles were deployed to contain the flow of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Other unmanned systems have been deployed nationally to survey and help in search and rescue and control situations such as the Red River flood in North Dakota and the Southwest wildfires. Every day, robots and unmanned systems serve as eyes in the sky and perform dangerous tasks for our troops overseas, providing an extra level of protection in hostile and dangerous environments.

In fact, the vast majority of robotics and unmanned systems innovation is happening in nascent small businesses - the backbone of our economy. Federal investments in robotics and unmanned systems can ensure these companies grow, thrive, and spur our economic recovery.

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