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School's Nutrition Research Institute To celebrate opening of new research center

THE SCHOOL'S NUTRITION RESEARCH Institute (NRI) in Kannapolis, N.C., will celebrate the opening of a new 126,000-square-foot research center in November 2008. NRI researchers and staff moved into the new building in August. The new center houses state-of-the-art equipment that will allow NRI scientists to study how nutrition can enhance human health.

NRI, part of the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, is devoted to discovering why people differ greatly in metabolism and nutrient requirements. The institute uses cutting-edge genomic and metabolomic biotechnology to develop innovative approaches to understanding the role of diet and activity in normal brain development, in the prevention of cancer and in the prevention and treatment of obesity and eating disorders. Metabolomics is the systematic study of metabolites — small molecules generated in the process of metabolism.

"We have much of the methodology available that could allow us to understand why people's metabolisms are so different," says

Dr. Steven Zeisel, NRI's director and Kenan Distinguished University Professor of nutrition and pediatrics in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the UNC School of Medicine.

NRI is located on the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis, about 25 miles north-east of Charlotte, N.C. The campus is a public-private partnership, spearheaded by David Murdock, owner and chairman of the board of Dole Food Company, Inc. The new center will house a metabolic kitchen, clinical facilities, a cognitive assessment suite, high-tech laboratories, office space and, tentatively, a body composition laboratory in which researchers can measure body density and fat.

"This institute will result in breakthroughs in how we use nutrition to enhance human health," Zeisel says. "We will be able to tailor recommendations on nutrition to the individual and not just give general guidelines. We can change how nutrition is practiced, and by so doing, change people's lives."

For more information on the Nutrition Research Institute, visit www.nri.unc.edu. ■