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**Aconity3D, Emerging Tech Leader in Laser-Based Additive Manufacturing, to Make Home at UTEP**

The University of Texas at El Paso will serve as the North American base of operations for Aconity3D, one of the world’s emerging technology leaders in the production of 3D printing equipment, under a new agreement announced by the two organizations this summer. Aconity3D, which is based in Herzogenrath, Germany, develops laser-based 3D printing machines for fabrication of complex metal parts for use in airplanes, automobiles, medical implants and more.

Aconity3D leaders say they were drawn to UTEP because of the prominence, expertise and facilities offered by the W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation. UTEP has been a leading force in the worldwide revolution of 3D printing since 2000 when the Keck Center and UTEP’s College of Engineering made strategic investments in additive manufacturing technologies, known more popularly as 3D printing, to assist manufacturers in prototyping parts before investing in costly manufacturing tools needed for production.

“We have long worked on leveraging our expertise in 3D printing to build a new economy in El Paso around additive manufacturing,” said Ryan Wicker, Ph.D., founder of the Keck Center. “Our partnership with Aconity3D is a major milestone in that direction and is validation of all of our combined efforts. The only way a company like Aconity3D would decide to come here is because of our technical strength in additive manufacturing, access to our graduating talent to meet their workforce needs, and the tremendous opportunities available for commercial success through collaborations with UTEP. We can apply this economic development model to build other businesses around their technologies, recruit other 3D printing businesses to our region and create new businesses from our own 3D printing technologies coming out of UTEP. As a research university, UTEP must be – and is excited to be – fully engaged in stimulating economic development for the benefit of our region.”

UTEP’s agreement with Aconity3D will further enhance its production and service operations, attract high-end jobs for engineering students in the community, and advance the broader technology through meaningful research investigations involving UTEP, Aconity3D, government agencies and industry. Global interest in metal 3D printing continues its rapid ascent as industry now looks to 3D printing to build next-generation products. AconityUS will be located at the University Towers Building, 1900 N. Oregon.

“We are pleased to establish a relationship with UTEP,” said Yves Hagedorn, Ph.D., managing director of Aconity3D. “This is an excellent example of how research universities can partner with private industry to advance the educational opportunities afforded to students and also attract economic development to the region. We are confident that the combined expertise of the Keck Center and Aconity3D will yield innovative approaches to 3D printing and offer world-class research opportunities for students.”

“This exciting collaboration is very well aligned with UTEP’s access and excellence mission,” UTEP President Diana Natalicio said. “UTEP is committed to providing our students with exceptional educational opportunities, many of which are advanced through the ground-breaking research underway on our campus. This agreement with Aconity3D will enhance UTEP’s research environment, broaden the range of experiences available to our students in the Keck Center for 3D Innovation, and attract new business development that will enable UTEP graduates to remain in this region to pursue their career goals.”

Initially, Aconity3D begins its operations in El Paso with a chief executive officer and plans to hire up to three employees within a year, focusing on UTEP graduates of the Keck Center with unique expertise in Aconity3D’s technology. The partnership’s long-term goal is to develop a technical center and research space in Keck Center facilities, which will operate in tandem with Aconity3D’s German headquarters to sell and service its 3D printers for North America. In Germany, Aconity3D has grown from a startup established in 2014 to a thriving company with more than 50 employees today. As its North American operations advance, the need for more engineering talent is expected to rise, and UTEP is poised to address Aconity3D’s workforce needs.

Extending its reach to the United States, Aconity3D saw the Keck Center’s success in the field of 3D printing and commitment to boost economic development as uniquely positioning UTEP for this collaboration. In 2015, UTEP’s Keck Center became the first satellite center for America Makes, the nation’s leading and collaborative partner in 3D printing technology research, discovery, creation and innovation. Structured as a public-private partnership with member organizations from industry, academia, government, nongovernment agencies, and workforce and economic development resources, America Makes partners work together to innovate and accelerate 3D printing to increase the country’s global manufacturing competitiveness.

“The Keck Center is a natural fit for Aconity3D as it is a recognized leader in additive manufacturing,” said Theresa A. Maldonado, Ph.D., dean of UTEP’s College of Engineering. “This collaboration will enhance our technical knowledge base and expand our expertise. We can also work collaboratively toward our model to incubate startups and provide them a pool of highly qualified graduates.”

The Keck Center is already home to a printer manufactured by Aconity3D. The laser powder bed fusion technology, as the particular 3D printing technology is known, uses metal powder and a laser controlled by a customized software platform capable of unprecedented design control. The process builds complicated 3D metal components layer by layer.

Aconity3D-produced printers are built with an open architecture system that allows users to modify its parameters to craft the best approach for fabricating a particular material desired by the customer – an approach that differs from the typical commercial approach of not allowing user control over build parameters. Extensive knowledge of functions is required to enable proper use of the technology, making Aconity3D equipment highly conducive to innovative research, which fuels the company’s corporate philosophy to locate near high-tech research organizations. Aconity3D’s Herzogenrath facility is located near the Fraunhofer Institute for Laser Technology (Fraunhofer ILT) in Aachen, Germany, a recognized world leader in laser metal 3D printing technology and where almost all of Aconity3D’s founders and employees pursued their advanced engineering degrees. Aconity3D maintains a strong collaboration with Fraunhofer ILT, which includes supporting students and interns from Fraunhofer ILT at their company – a successful model that will be implemented in El Paso, including student internships in Germany and El Paso between Aconity3D and UTEP.

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