Weaver Named Director of Purdue’s Discovery Learning Center

by Phillip Fiorini

Gabriela C. Weaver, a professor and associate head of Purdue’s Department of Chemistry, is the new Jerry and Rosie Semler Director of the Discovery Learning Center in Discovery Park. Weaver served as the center’s interim director since September.

“Dr. Weaver has been a national leader in developing instructional technologies that include DVDs, Web sites and videogames for teaching chemistry and science,” said Richard Buckius, Purdue’s vice president for research. “She brings a keen eye for innovative learning, research and development of tomorrow’s students and teachers to this important role as director of the Discovery Learning Center.”

Weaver takes the center’s reins as it begins a move into a $25 million, four-story research and learning facility in Discovery Park, said Alan Rebar, executive director of Discovery Park and senior associate vice president for research. Located at the corner of Jischke and Nimitz drives, the new building is expected to be complete this fall.

The Discovery Learning Center is advancing research and innovation that revolutionize learning in the STEM disciplines — science, technology, engineering and math — and organizes undergraduate student internship programs. Research involving learning spaces, both physical and virtual, will be a cornerstone of its activities with the opening of the new building.

Since its launch in 2003, the center has generated research funding of nearly $50 million for projects focused on the science of learning, design of innovative educational programs and development of interactive learning technologies. The center currently leads more than 30 projects involving 180 faculty members from every Purdue college and school and has established collaborations with more than 50 external partners.

Weaver received her bachelor’s degree in chemistry in 1989 from the California Institute of Technology and a doctorate in chemical physics in 1994 from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She served as an assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Colorado at Denver from 1994 to 2001. During that time, she shifted the focus of her research work from physical chemistry to educational research and the development of instructional technologies.

Weaver joined Purdue in 2001 as an associate professor and in 2004 became director of the Center for Authentic Science Practice in Education. She has co-authored two different first-year chemistry textbooks and is a contributing author to several edited volumes on educational research, including a commissioned paper for the Promising Practices in Undergraduate STEM Education project of the National Academy of Science’s Board on Science Education.

Phillip Fiorini is senior marketing and communication specialist for Discovery Park and Purdue Marketing and Media.