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Office of Public Affairs / News & Media Relations

NEWS RELEASE

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Nano-safety journal debuts ratings

Interactive feature lets peers score technical papers for quality

HOUSTON -- (June 17, 2009) -- The Rice University-based International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON) has introduced an interactive feature to its Virtual Journal of Nanotechnology Environment, Health and Safety (VJ-NanoEHS) that allows users to post ratings and comments about technical papers archived at the site.

The five-star rating system, which was developed with extensive input from interested stakeholders, provides registered users an opportunity to acknowledge the publications that best exemplify good research practice and effective communication.

A survey of potential contributors found that as the pace of nano-EHS publication rapidly increases, some VJ followers believe a rating system would help the highest-quality work to be identified. That will allow such work to serve as a model to others moving into the field and to better inform the public dialogue over nanotechnology's risks and benefits.

When viewing the abstract of a paper archived in the VJ-NanoEHS, users now have an option to mark the paper with a rating from one to five stars as well as post a comment explaining their rating. Among the factors to consider when rating a paper are considerations of materials characterization, dose metrics and clarity of explanation.

With the introduction of this new feature, ICON continues to extend the utility of its comprehensive database on nano-safety. Other

features include a customized search function and an analysis tool that allows users to track research trends over time.

The ICON Virtual Journal is freely available at
<http://icon.rice.edu/virtualjournal.cfm>.

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Who Knew? <http://explore.rice.edu/explore/Who_Knew.asp>

Located in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked one of America's best teaching and research universities. Known for its "unconventional wisdom," Rice is distinguished by its: size -- 3,001 undergraduates and 2,144 graduate students; selectivity -- 12 applicants for each place in the freshman class; resources -- an undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio of 5-to-1; sixth largest endowment per student among American private research universities; residential college system, which builds communities that are both close-knit and diverse; and collaborative culture, which crosses disciplines, integrates teaching and research, and intermingles undergraduate and graduate work.

The International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON) is an international, multi-stakeholder organization based at Rice University. Our mission is to develop and communicate information regarding potential environmental and health risks of nanotechnology thereby fostering risk reduction while maximizing societal benefit. The council has evolved into a network of scholars, industrialists, government officials and public interest advocates who share information and perspectives on a broad range of issues at the intersection of nanotechnology and environment, health and safety. We maintain a public portal for information on nanomaterial environment, health and safety (EHS) at <http://icon.rice.edu>.