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New CIBOR chief has a long history in startups

BY JERRY SIEBENMARK
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Rich Sullivan is about to embark on his fifth life sciences startup.

Only this time, it's not a bioscience firm engaged in the development of a new drug or medical device, but a public-private partnership organized to commercialize the development of medical products using advanced materials.

On Friday, the National Center of Innovation for Biomaterials in Orthopaedic Research named Sullivan, 62, its permanent president and chief executive.

Sullivan, who starts Monday, replaces John Moore, former Cessna executive and lieutenant governor who has been CIBOR's interim CEO since it was founded last year.

CIBOR is a partnership between Via Christi Health and Wichita State University to research, develop and commercialize advanced composite materials for use in bioscience and medical applications.

Sullivan was most recently the CEO of Interface Biologics in Toronto. He led the startup Canadian bioscience firm for five years and as its chief was responsible for its fundraising, which totals \$17 million since its founding in 2001.

He has 30 years' experience as a senior executive, 20 as a president or C-level executive.

Sullivan was contacted by Leawood-based EFL Associates, an executive search firm, about the CIBOR job. He said CIBOR is "the perfect convergence of clinical and academic research" and the composite material projects its scientists are working on make it "really a good situation."

Sullivan, who grew up in St. Louis and graduated from Benedictine College in Atchison, said his preference is to work at startups.

"You can see immediate results and the ability to create something from nothing; it's really very gratifying," he said.

CIBOR's funding support from the Kansas Bioscience Authority — \$4 million initially from a total of \$20 million over five years — makes it an even more attractive opportunity, Sullivan said.

"That really is a plus, so that the organization can get these projects through to commercialization," he said.

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