

MARCH 4

- 1:00 – 1:10 p.m. Welcome by John Lumpe, CEO, Illinois Soybean Association
- 1:10 – 1:30 p.m. The Vision of the Illinois Soybean Innovation Center
- Todd Main, Director of Market Development, Illinois Soybean Association
 - Steve Pitstick, Illinois Soybean Association District 2 Director
- 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. Strength Through Collaboration: Universities as the Crucible of Innovation
Framing the Challenge: Lisa Freeman, President, Northern Illinois University, introduced by Steve Pistick
- Chris Merrett, Executive Director, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Western Illinois University, Chair, IIN – Moderator
 - Doug Cruitt, Executive Director, Distillery Labs
 - Kim Kidwell, Associate Chancellor for Strategic Partnership & Initiatives, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, IFAB
 - Gary Kinsel, Research & Innovation Strategist, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- 2:45 – 3:15 p.m. Break
- 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. Panel – The Innovation Ecosystem: Connecting the Dots of Opportunity, R&D, Commercialization, and a Favorable Business Climate
- Brady Holst, Illinois Soybean Association Board Member – Moderator
 - Ken Anderson, Director of the Advanced Energy Institute and Professor of Geology, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
 - Kara Demirjian Huss, Senior Vice President, T/CCI Manufacturing and Founder/President, DCC Marketing
 - Craig McLaughlan, Professor of Chemistry, Illinois State University & IIN Vice Chair
 - Kristi Dula, Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology
- 4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Innovation in Practice: 2025 Springboard Challenge Awardees and Innovators
- Ron Kindred, Illinois Soybean Association Board, Member, Moderator
 - Mahdi Vaezi (NIU), Bioplastics
 - David Demirjian (Midwest Bioprocessing Center), Xylitol
 - Junli Liu (Purdue), Low-carbon specialty lipids
 - Annie Yojaira Vargas Lizarazo (SIUC), Rare earth extraction
 - Kyle Plunkett (SIUC), Self-Healing Polymers
 - Saptarshi Ghosh (SIUC) and Lahiru Jayakody (SIUC), Soybealon
- 5:30 p.m. Depart for Reception and Dinner, Reality on Monroe - 111 E. Monroe Street, Bloomington, IL
- 6:15 – 8:00 p.m. Reception, Dinner and Speaker
- Thomas L. Theis, Director, Institute for Environmental Science and Policy, University of Illinois Chicago

Special thanks to the Illinois Innovation Network



MARCH 5

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Networking Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. Illinois Department of Agriculture (invited) – Diversifying Illinois Agricultural Markets

- Introduced by Illinois Soybean Association Chairman Bryan Severs

9:45 – 10:00 a.m. Break

10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Panel: The Paths to Commercialization

- Jacob Kinsey, Senior Director, Illinois Ventures – Moderator-Panelist
- Brad Edwards, Senior Technology Manager, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign Office of Technology Management
- Robert Patino, Director of Technology Transfer, Southern Illinois University - System
- Suseelan Pookote, Director of UIC Office of Technology Management
- Gerald Wilson, Director of Entrepreneurship, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign Research Park

11:00 – 11:30 a.m. 2026 SpringBoard Challenge: Bioplastics, Lubricants, PFAS Solutions, Biopolymers and Farm Products

- Todd Main

11:30 – 12:00 p.m. 2026 SpringBoard Funding Opportunity

- Peter Creticos, President & Executive Director, Institute for Work and the Economy

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