



## E-BRIEF



**NORTHWEST OHIO  
INNOVATION CONSORTIUM**

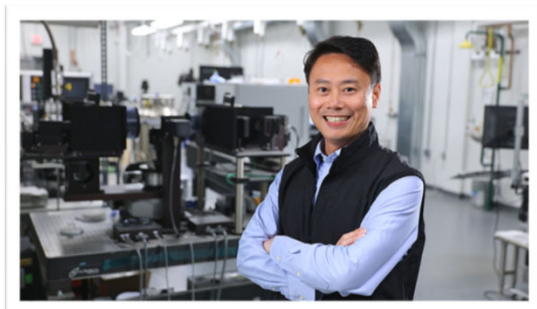
POWERING INNOVATION TOGETHER

**NOVEMBER 2025**

### UPDATE FROM THE INNOVATION HUB

As our projects garner interest and our partnerships expand, the Consortium has grown into a larger role within our local organizational ecosystem. This past month focused heavily on community engagement. NOIC hosted the Ohio Innovation Hub Summit at Frist Solar, participated in Great Lakes AI Week, and collaborated with our fellow regional manufacturing organizations to determine how best we can work together to create more cohesive partnerships and improved industry resources as we head into the new year.

### SPOTLIGHT: DR. ZHAO



Dr. Donghui Zhao

The University of Toledo, in partnership with NOIC, recently welcomed Dr. Donghui Zhao to provide academic and research leadership to the Glass Innovation Hub. A national expert in materials science, Dr. Zhao joined UToledo as an associate professor with a primary appointment in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and joint responsibilities in the College of Engineering. He will play a large role in the success of our efforts to cement the region as a global leader of glass innovation.

Dr. Zhao brings a strong combination of academic and industry expertise, as he holds a doctorate in materials science and engineering

from Lehigh University, and has gained a deep understanding of the glass industry through leadership roles at Corning, Alkegen and Saint-Gobain. His academic and industry backgrounds will enhance the ability of our university and industry partners to collaborate on technical projects like glass strengthening and lightweighting, energy reduction, furnace improvement and more.

Dr. Zhao also leads the creation of interdisciplinary glass science curriculum at UToledo, currently underway, with his classes set to begin in 2026. Along with the implementation of advanced glass courses, he will guide up to six graduate students in their glass studies and involvement with NOIC research.

### INNOVATION HUB SUMMIT RECAP

NOIC recently gathered the four Ohio Innovation Hubs for the second 2025 Innovation Hub Summit, along with Ohio Department of Development staff and NOIC Board members. The summit covered updates from each of the hubs, as well as an overview of recycling optimization in Northwest Ohio, a discussion around the possibility of sharing data between hubs and best practices for doing so, and a panel focused on bringing more capital into the hubs network.



First Solar Manufacturing Plant in Toledo

Summit attendees also experienced an exciting manufacturing tour at the First Solar

Toledo plant. Our team appreciated the opportunity to connect and collaborate with all who were able to join us for this informative event. Thank you to the First Solar team for hosting us and coordinating a wonderful tour of the facility!

## **GREAT LAKES AI WEEK RECAP**

Several members of the NOIC team recently took part in Great Lakes AI Week, hosted by Bowling Green State University. The event brought together over 1,000 professionals to discuss the role of AI in education and the workforce. BGSU's selection to host the event is significant, as the University launched the nation's first customizable AI+X bachelor's degree program earlier this year, combining the study of artificial intelligence with any of the six following fields: computer science, mathematics, physics, history, journalism, or public relations.

The NOIC team provided speakers and coordinated panel discussion participants for eight unique sessions specifically regarding the manufacturing applications of AI. We were honored to showcase our own AI project progress to date and vision for the future as our Process AI Control team continues to fine-tune methods for utilizing AI to improve the efficiency of glass melting furnace operations.

Like-minded innovators participated in workshops, masterclasses, and presentations led by a diverse range of professionals, including industry experts, university deans, regional thought leaders, and graduate students. connect with other teams moving the industry forward and meet potential future partners with whom our vision resonates.

We were proud to partner with Bowling Green State University, the University of Toledo, Enterprise Technology Association, Actual Reality Technologies, and many more organizations to hold a productive roundtable discussion centered around strategically creating a manufacturing-focused innovation ecosystem in the Northwest Ohio area.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **December 18<sup>th</sup> 12-1 PM: Virtual Lunch & Learn Series: NOIC's 2025 Year in Review**

Hear from our Program Managers about each pillar's progress throughout the year, highlighting accomplishments, obstacles overcome, and the future direction of each initiative.

Happy holidays from the NOIC team!



We wish you a happy, healthy, and safe season as celebrations continue through the New Year.

Sincerely,

Roger Smith  
President  
Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.