cally," says Pappas, "the color perceived by the human eye or by a diagnostic reader is related to the microparticle diameter. Therefore, one could develop a visual immunoassay that could simultaneously detect two infectious agents or antigens in a single test sample."

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect about VIA is its versatility. "It's ultra-generic," says Pappas, noting that it could potentially be used as the detection system for nucleic acid probe diagnostics as well. Here, industry experts warn, VIA's sensitivity will be severely tested.

"Users for most of the tests really don't care what the technology is," Kirkegaard concludes. "They're interested in whatever the dipsticks are designed to measure. It all comes down to 'what's the most user-friendly,' and beyond that it gets down to cost."

—Arthur Klausner

ACADEME

THREE U.K. UNIVERSITIES COMMIT TO BIOTECH

LONDON—Despite the acute financial problems that have hit Britain's universities since the beginning of this decade, three U.K. campuses recently announced expansion plans in the biological sciences.

The University of Reading has merged its departments of horticulture, botany, and agricultural botany to create a new School of Plant Sciences that will embrace crop development, plant breeding, germplasm conservation, and research into plant diseases. "It has now dawned both on governments and international agencies that the future of mankind will be linked directly to the availability of plant food reserves," says professor Hugh Dickinson, chairman of the new School. "These are exciting developments, and we are now ready to play a greater part in them." Staffed by 75 scientists and technicians, the School includes a contracts group whose role is to forge strong links with industry.

Twenty-five miles away in Guildford, meanwhile, the University of Surrey is planning a new cytotechnology laboratory. Funded jointly by the Wolfson Foundation, the University Grants Committee, and Surrey University itself, the £1-million-plus project will give Guildford a semi-industrial-scale pilot plant with six 100-liter bioreactors, housed in a building suitable for the production of putative therapeutic and prophylactic agents for testing in animals and humans. Initiating construction of the laboratory (due for completion in September 1987), Sir Austin Pearce, pro-chancellor of Surrey University and chairman of British Aerospace, highlighted the building as "part of Surrey's program to become the leading university in animal cell biotechnology in Britain."

Further north, in a ceremony at the University of Buckingham, Vivien Clore Duffield has opened the new Clore Laboratory for the Biological Sciences. Twenty years after the first students arrived at Buckingham University—the only U.K. college that does not receive direct government funding—it has resolved to expand

its coverage of life sciences into physiological biochemistry. Directing both research and teaching will be Professor Anne Beloff-Chain, widow of Sir Ernst Chain, who in 1945 shared a Nobel Prize with Alexander Fleming

and Howard Florey for the development of penicillin. She will continue the work on diabetes, obesity, and related topics that she pursued at Imperial College (London).

—Bernard Dixon

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