



NORTHWESTERN INSTITUTE  
ON COMPLEX SYSTEMS (NICO)

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NORTHWESTERN  
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**Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems  
invites you to its  
Weekly Seminar**



**Speaker:** James Evans, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,  
University of Chicago

**Title:** Industry Collaboration and Theory in Academic Science

**When:** Wednesday, March 14, 2007

**Where:** Chambers Hall, 600 Foster Street, Lower Classroom Level

**Time:** 12:00 – 1:00

***NICO Coffee Hour will follow for questions, networking, and collaboration***

**Abstract**

Academic collaboration with science-based firms provides an occasion to consider underlying differences between academic and industrial science when only their ends, theories vs. products, distinguish them. The author argues that industry's relative indifference to theory nudges academic collaborators toward speculation. The study evaluates this proposition using archival materials and fieldwork, as well as fixed-effect panel models of all academic research using the popular plant model, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, and the firms that support it. Findings suggest that industry partnerships draw high-status academics away from confirming theories, and toward exploration. This influence reaches through partnering academics, weaving their discoveries into a looser scientific fabric: Industry entices academics to know less about more. Government funding plays a complementary role, sponsoring persistent, conservative scientific activity and moving its sponsored findings into the dense clusters of collaboration that facilitate scientific community and understanding.