

Ground-breaking event

Call it subtle irony: The ground breaking for SLAC's Linac Coherent Light Source (LCLS) took place among earth movers that had already been busily transforming the rolling California landscape for weeks. But, compared to the amount of earth yet to be moved, the heaps of dirt piled around the construction site seemed about as inconsequential as the tiny shovelfuls of ceremonial dirt turned over by the attending dignitaries on October 20.

"There are 180,000 cubic yards of this kind of dirt to move to achieve LCLS," said SLAC Director Jonathan Dorfan, flanked by Department of Energy Under Secretary for Science Raymond Orbach, Stanford Provost John Etchemendy, and Congress members Anna Eshoo and Zoe Lofgren, each with a silver shovel. "And as competent and wonderful as this group is, we're not going to get it done with these shovels."

The LCLS represents more than just a new chapter in the life of SLAC's venerable linear accelerator. As the world's first free-electron laser to generate "hard" X-rays, the LCLS will open the door to pioneering science—from capturing images on the atomic scale, to time-resolved movies of ultra-fast phenomena such as molecules in motion.

The final highlight of the proceedings came as the Stanford marching band—members clad variously in spandex, gold lamé, costume jewelry, pajamas, Halloween costumes, and funk-a-delic sunglasses—marauded onto the scene at the end of the ceremony. The stately crowd under the tent quickly coalesced into a throng as the band, accompanied by enthusiastic dancers, played tunes like *Radar Love* by Golden Earring and *Golgi Apparatus* by Phish.

Text: Brad Plummer

Photos: Diana Rogers, SLAC



Breaking ground are (from left), Jonathan Dorfan, John Etchemendy, Raymond Orbach, Anna Eshoo, and Zoe Lofgren.

Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren looks on as Congressman Mike Honda, who joined the latter part of the ground breaking festivities, shakes hands with Department of Energy Under Secretary for Science Raymond Orbach.

