

# INNOVATIONS

## Cutting 'EDGE' development

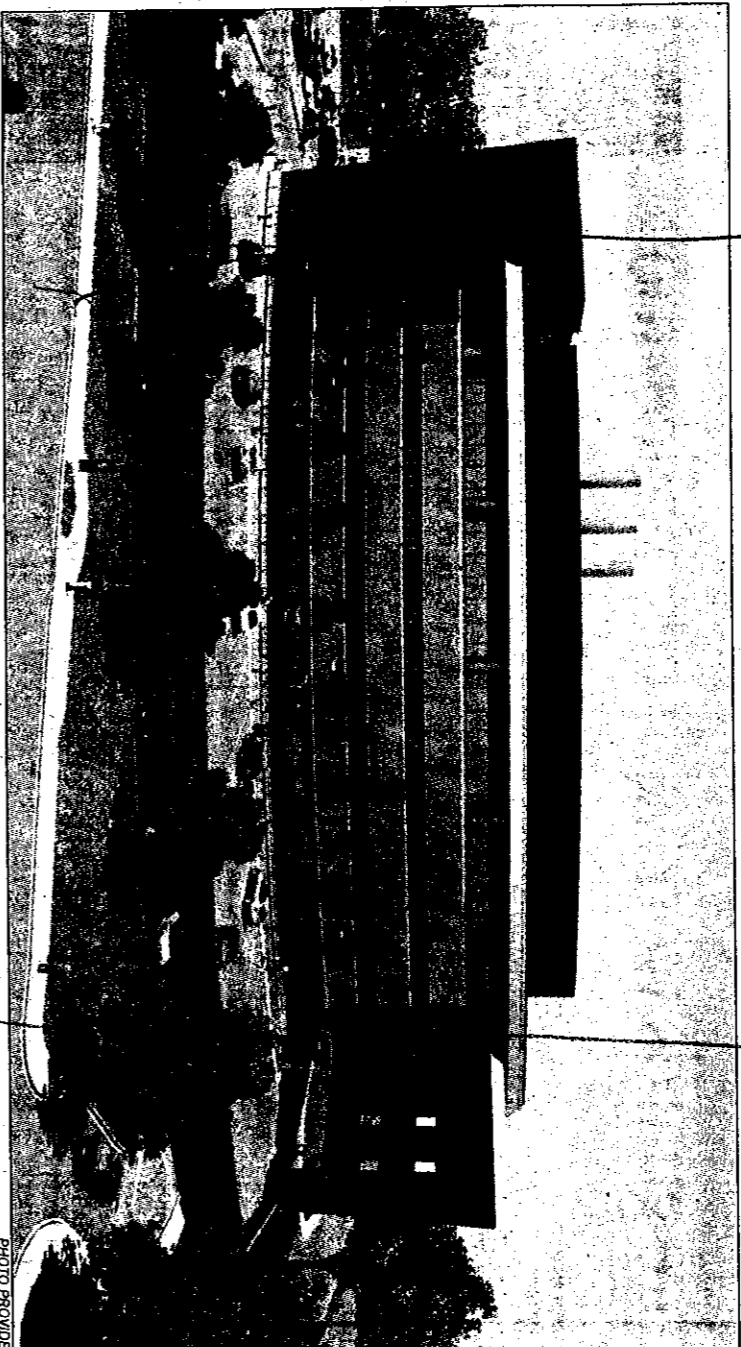


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This drawing shows plans for the \$38 million expansion of the Dean A. McGee Eye Institute.

### Creation, \$150 million funding of research endowment tops 2006 technology news

By Jim Stafford  
Business Writer

Those brainstorming sessions by Gov. Henry's EDGE committee a few years ago yielded some wild visions for Oklahoma's future, the most audacious of which was a call for a \$1 billion research endowment.

The goal? Make Oklahoma the "Research Capital of the Plains" by using earnings from the massive fund to provide capital for technology based projects throughout the state.

Of course, the challenge of actually creating the EDGE endowment vexed legislators and technology advocates and it remained an untended dream. Until now.

The legislature made a "down payment" on the EDGE fund in 2006 when it appropriated the first \$150 million to permanently endow the fund, making the wild Research Capital of the Plains vision seem more realistic. Creation of the EDGE fund is *The Oklahoman's* No. 1 Oklahoma tech-related story for 2006.

"I think the EDGE fund is clearly No. 1," said Greg Main, chief executive officer for i2E, the nonprofit corporation that mentors many tech-related start-up businesses and manages the Oklahoma Technology Commercialization Center. "It's a two-part story: the creation of the fund structure, and governance mechanism and appropriation of the first \$150 million."

Main was one of nearly a dozen state leaders surveyed for their thoughts on the state's top tech stories of the year. Creation of the EDGE fund emerged as a common theme among respondents.

Also ranking creation of the EDGE fund at the top of her list was Sheri Stickley, Edmond-based vice president of the state Science and Technology Institute, a national organization representing technology-based economic development organizations such as the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology.

"This demonstrates that Oklahoma's political leadership understands, and is committed to, the critical role of research and technology commercialization in determining Oklahoma's economic future," Stickley said.

In addition to the EDGE fund, the legislature also appropriated money to fund research and facilities statewide at both universities and foundations.

#### Top 10 stories

The rest of the state's top 10 tech-related stories for 2006 include a mix of private ventures, foundation news and university initiatives:

- **ProCure Treatment Centers:** Cancer treatment in Oklahoma City will take a high-tech turn when the \$95 million proton treatment facility opens for business in 2006. A group of Oklahoma City doctors and an investment group led by energy executive Aubrey McClendon have signed on a local investors in the project brought to town by the Bloomington, Ind.-based company.
- **OCAST budget increase:** The state's technology-based

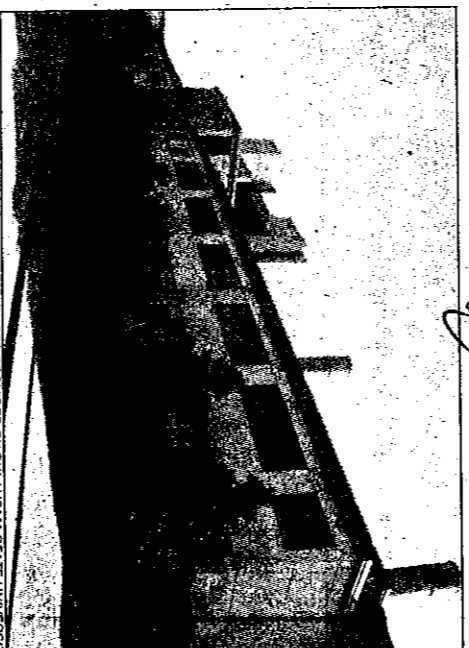


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The new National Sensor Testing Lab in Ponca City.

economic development agency won a \$10 million budget increase this year that also included \$5 million to establish a seed fund and more than \$1 million for nanotechnology initiatives.

■ **OU Cancer Center:** The University of Oklahoma broke ground on a \$90 million cancer research center that is expected to attract top scientists to it Oklahoma Health Center campus.

■ **Dean McGee Eye Institute groundbreaking:** The eye institute broke ground on a \$38 million expansion that will double its research and clinical capacity. The center will bring in more researchers and see more patients each year when the 78,000 square foot expansion is completed.

■ **New OMRP president:** Dr. Stephen Prescott, a leading medical researcher and chief executive officer of the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah, is named to succeed Dr. J. Donald Capra as president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. The foundation also celebrated its 60th anniversary during the year.

■ **Sensor Research Center:** ConocoPhillips donated a 72,000 square foot building on its Ponca City campus to OSU, which will search for a national sensor testing center. Much of the center's work will revolve around sensors used in military and homeland security applications.

■ **Noble Foundation collaborations:** Ardmore-based Noble Foundation expanded its research into better livestock forage and crops for biofuels with a pair of ventures. First, it announced a collaboration with Oklahoma State University for a new Research Institute in Ardmore. Then it formed a partnership with California-based Ceres Inc. to conduct research into developing switchgrass varieties for use in biofuels.

■ **National Weather Center:** The University of Oklahoma opened the \$69 million National Weather Center on its South Research Campus, expanding its reputation as the center of weather research in the nation. The new facility brings together state, federal and educational resources with a focus on weather forecasting and research.

■ **Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth:** OU opened the center and named its first class of interns who dove right into the mission of transferring technology-based research on campus into successful private companies. The vision for the center also includes an "entrepreneurial village" that would house a business incubator and "entrepreneurs in residence," who would mentor fledging entrepreneurs.