

Louise Abercrombie, Business Editor

Sensor Testing Lab May Be Biggest OSU Project

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Dr. Stephen McKeever, vice president of research and technology at Oklahoma State University, predicts that the University Multispectral Center research sensor testing lab will be the biggest project ever of the university.

In that prediction, McKeever included the current \$800 million building projects on the campus at OSU.

The UML is to be located at the Research East building on the ConocoPhillips complex, with an auxiliary unit at Stillwater.

Important to OSU

Speaking here at the Economic Conference on Nov. 17, McKeever said that Ponca City is included in what OSU President David Schmidly describes as the "land grant triangle."

Even before the sensor testing project came up Schmidly's goal was determined to become more "engaged" with

the Ponca City area community, according to McKeever; also for Ponca City to become more involved with OSU.

Telling the history of the UML project, McKeever revealed that ConocoPhillips had approached OSU about taking over the Research East facility. "At that time we didn't see how we could do that. It would not be convenient for a professor to come out of the classroom and drive for miles for an experiment and drive 40 miles back to teach a class.

Ponders Use of Lab

"Initially that aspect of what we could do here was allusive to us. But Tim Reynolds (now manager of Business Operations for UML) and I went to my office and sketched out on a white board an idea of what we could do based upon the concept."

McKeever added that the diagram stayed on the board for six months. "We kept looking at it and refining it and reminding ourselves about our initial idea and mission."

Sensor Research

The importance of this area of research (sensor) to OSU can not be understated. We've been involved in sensor research for many, many years, primarily through our

agriculture base.

"Because the events of 9/11 brought home the importance to all of us the role of sensors and the technology of security was really emphasized after that point."

McKeever continued, "That coincided with an opportunity to go to the Oklahoma State government and request an investment for the sensor project at OSU. They (legislature) were visionary enough to invest \$19 million specifically for sensor growth and technology research. OSU has since been able to leverage that into \$70 million in outside funding and external contracts. It was because of the infrastructure, that we were able to build the investment."

OSU eventually built 13 biological sensor labs on the campus including safety, chemical and radiation facilities.

As a result of all that activity the sensor research grew and the university started with an idea to promote commercialization of the technology.

Previously after the sensors were tested and the information remained on the shelves, there was no way the government could take the technology to soldiers and in the field. (See PREDICTION, Page 3A)



Stephen McKeever