

Monday, April 9, 2007

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News Story Published On 10/22/2006

UW dedicates business incubator

By Aaron LeClair
Boomerang Staff Writer

The era of high-tech business development in Wyoming took a major step forward with the University of Wyoming formally dedicating its small-business incubator.

UW officials, business owners and local and state dignitaries turned out for the dedication of the Wyoming Technology Business Center, which is located at 1938 Harney.

The dedication began with a speech from UW president Tom Buchanan inside a snow-covered tent in the WTBC parking lot. Buchanan said the WTBC would go a long way in improving both Laramie and Wyoming's economy.

"Research indicates that incubation programs help diversify economies, commercialize technologies, create jobs and build wealth," Buchanan said.

Buchanan thanked the UW Board of Trustees, Wyoming legislature and the Joint Mineral, Business and Economic Development Committee for providing the guidance and funding to make the WTBC a reality.

In addition, Buchanan recognized former Gov. Jim Geringer, who provided valuable support for the project in the initial stages.

Finally, Buchanan recognized Gov. Dave Freudenthal. "He's been a consistent advocate for diversifying Wyoming's economy."

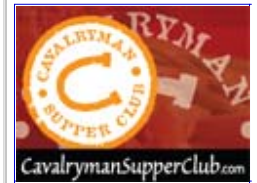
Following Buchanan, Freudenthal joined the UW president in honoring Geringer.

"This project actually started before I came into office," Freudenthal said.



BARBARA J. PERENIC/Boomerang photographer
Scott Tafel, CEO of WindRider Technology, speaks in the company's office at the grand opening of the Wyoming Technology Business Center on Saturday at 1938 Harney in Laramie.

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Freudenthal recognized Mick and Susie McMurray, Casper philanthropists and UW alumni who donated \$1.6 million to the cause.

"The McMurray family stepped up," Freudenthal said. "For that, I am appreciative and much in their debt."

Freudenthal said the WTBC would provide its clients with "remarkable capacity with regard to communications and movement of data" on the state level.

"I look forward to its expansion and many more like it in the state," he said.

Sen. Craig Thomas, who along with Sen. Mike Enzi and Rep. Barbara Cubin, raised \$7.7 million in federal funds, said the WTBC was one of the most impressive projects of which he has ever been a part.

"I hope we all understand the impact that this can have," he said. "We can do things in Wyoming now that you can do anywhere."

Cubin said UW has come a long way since its founding in 1887, when five professors and two tutors taught classes to 42 students.

Almost 120 years later, Wyoming has grown into a competitive research and development institution with 13,000 students studying more than 180 specialized education programs.

With the opening of the WTBC, UW is further distinguishing itself as a supporter of technology, research and small-business development, Cubin said.

"With over 70 percent of Wyoming's working population employed by small businesses, it makes it ever so much more important that we have a place to help these people," she said. "It's a great day for ... the entire community."

After a speech by Mike McMurry, who handed the university his final check from the McMurry Foundation, Buchanan introduced Bill Gern, the UW vice president for research and economic development.

Buchanan described Gern as one of the principal architects behind the project. "This incubator has been Bill's vision from the start," he said. "He, along with the other members of the planning team, has our thanks for making concrete out of fog."

Gern said the WTBC was estimated to more than double the amount of research that has been done by UW over the past 10 years.

The Wyoming Technology Business Center

The two-story, 30,000 square-foot WTBC was designed for small, technology-based businesses that could benefit from the university's research capabilities.

According to Bill Gern, UW vice president of research and economic development, the WTBC has a two-plus tier data center, quadruple-redundant broadband Internet access, redundant power and redundant environmental control.

The WBTC is connected by an underground tunnel to the university's central energy plant.

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Currently, the WTBC has nine clients:

n ADA Wyoming — a company that develops early-stage Wyoming technologies by helping secure federal grants.

n Analogic Engineering — an engineering business that provides contract software and electronics design services.

n ChapaCode — provides custom database solutions for everything from infrastructure networking to Web presence. (www.chapacode.net)

n Firehole Technologies — a research and development company that develops computer software technology for improved failure analysis of composite materials for the development of space structures. (www.fireholetech.com)

n Happy Jack Software — HJS specializes in creating web-based software, featuring a comprehensive calendar suite that helps companies promote their events online. (www.happyjacksoftware.com)

n Medicine Bow Technologies — Ivinson Memorial Hospital's Application Service Provider (ASP) that provides access to premier hospital information systems like Meditech and DR Systems.

n Thought Equity — the worldwide leader in motion imagery licensing and management for the entertainment, creative and corporate production industries. (www.thoughtequity.com)

n WindRider Technology — a company that makes high-end computers that can link up to 26 different displays without a decrease in performance and are focused on the day trader and graphics markets. (www.windridertech.com)

n Wyoming Space and Information Systems — a company that has developed software for online archiving in the information systems market.

The clients said the WTBC was an extraordinary facility that was providing them with a great opportunity to expand their businesses.

Kent D. Henry, ADA Wyoming officer manager and senior research scientist, said the WTBC provides the necessary infrastructure and guidance to help small, technology-based businesses grow.

"The incubator is wonderful," he said. "This is a blessing to the state, and to Laramie, to grow technology."

Additionally, Henry enjoys the community atmosphere that the WTBC has created among its clients.

"You're not working by yourself when you start up a technology," he said. "You have a group of other people in the same position. While you are starting your own business, you're collaborating and have camaraderie with the other businesses. That really makes it a team environment."

Jon Benson, the WTBC chief executive officer, said currently there are no plans to expand because they have extra space in the Wyoming Research Institute, where they have Wyoming Space and Information Systems.

Benson said the amount of time that a small business spends in the

incubator's protective next depends upon how fast it grows.

"The idea is is that you'll come and we'll help you grow your business," Benson said. "You'll reach a certain stage where you're growing and you've developed a management team and when that happens ... it's time for you to go out and find some other space."

Benson said he is in negotiations with other companies who are waiting to get into the incubator or the temporary space at the Wyoming Research Institute.

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