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Sweet Suites in Hershey

After a successful first phase of development, the Pennsylvania research center is set to launch a new incubator.

Building on the success of a previous project, the Hershey Center for Applied Research (HCAR) is embarking on its Technology Suites II project, which it predicts will create nearly 300 jobs in life sciences and other sectors.

The Technology Suites II project will operate as a landing pad for domestic as well as foreign-based life-sciences entrepreneurs looking to enter the U.S. market. Within 7,500 sq. ft. (697 sq. m.) of space, companies in the Technology Suites II project will have access to state-of-the-art wet and dry laboratory facilities, as well as strategic business services and research resources. The project is being supported by a US\$1-million grant to HCAR from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Public Works program.

In May 2007, the Hershey Center for

Applied Research launched its Technology Suites I project, consisting of five flexible wet laboratory facilities totaling approximately 5,000 sq. ft. (465 sq. m.). These original Technology Suites were supported by a \$700,000 grant from the Life Sciences Greenhouse of Central Pennsylvania, a state sponsored program designed to support early-stage life sciences companies in the region. With all five labs in Technology Suites I currently leased by growing technology companies, the initial project is at full capacity. HCAR sees its Technology Suites II project as positioned to serve the region's growing demand for wet and dry laboratory facilities.

"We market to early stage companies and also to mature companies in four main sectors," says Jack Atchason, director of business development. "Life sciences are a strong focus because of our location adjacent to the Penn State Medical Center and College of Medicine. Nanotech is a key area, as are cleantech and IT. The companies have to have a significant research component."

Atchason says the companies expected to locate within the project can run the whole gamut of life sciences companies from drug discovery and diagnostics to medical devices.

"This is early stage space," Atchason says. "These are start-up companies that are either born here or re-born here and hopefully will grow and proliferate here. We calculated based on estimates of what the normal job attrition rate of life sciences companies is and we came close to 300 direct and indirect jobs. So, this can be a stopping round or a starting place and they would move to other space, hopefully in the park. Or, they could be foreign companies looking for a soft landing spot in the U.S. We've had such high demand for space."

Atchason says HCAR hopes to begin construction on the lab space by January and have it complete within a year.

"This project supports south central PA's transition from being a legacy economy supported by manufacturing to one that is sustainable and fueled by innovation," said Laura J. Butcher, executive director of the HCAR. "Our current and future tenants are discovering life-enhancing medical devices, diagnostics and therapies that are creating family-sustaining jobs and enabling south-central Pennsylvania to compete in the global economy."

In a separate development at HCAR, life sciences tenants leasing laboratory, clean room or production space are eligible to apply for up to a \$2-million grant. Minimum requirements include leasing 8,000 sq. ft. (743 sq. m.) of space.

"The developers [Wexford Science & Technology] have made available up to \$2 million for more mature type companies to locate in our facility," Atchason says. "In this day and age of companies looking for subsidies and dollars to help aspects of their operations, it is an exciting offer getting some real interest."

The first building of the research park, consisting of 80,000 sq. ft. (7,322 sq. m.), was completed in April 2007. The campus is master planned to include up to 11 similar buildings totaling 1.2 million sq. ft. (111,480 sq. m.).


by **JOHN MCCURRY**
john.mccurry@conway.com



HCAR opened its first facility in 2007.



E-mail your comments or inquiries directly to john.mccurry@conway.com

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