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[ From Lansing State Journal ]**\$17.1 million, 185 jobs**

State grants, loans encourage new products and research

By Jeremy W. Steele  
Lansing State Journal

Nearly six years ago, a research team at Michigan State University filed its first patent request for a new laser technology.

On Wednesday, chemistry professor Marcos Dantus was awarded \$1.4 million in state aid to help turn those lasers into viable products.

"I always say overnight success takes about 10 years," said Dantus, whose lasers analyze chemical compounds in biological samples.

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The laser project was among 61 proposals statewide awarded a share of \$100 million in grants and loans from the state's 21st Century Jobs Fund.

Nearly one-fifth of those state grants and loans were doled out to 14 high-tech operations in the Lansing area - all tied to research

at or technology developed by Michigan State University.

That work ranges from Dantus' lasers to biobased materials to nanotechnology. State and local officials hope those new technologies will mean new jobs in an economy battered by a domestic auto industry in turmoil.

**3,161 jobs statewide**

The 61 projects - from the advanced manufacturing, life sciences, homeland security and alternative energy sectors - are expected to create 3,161 jobs, including 185 through the Lansing-area proposals, over the next few years.

"We have an economy that for 100 years has been focused mostly on

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(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)

Advancing laser technology: MSU chemistry professor Marcos Dantus demonstrates a simple laser system Wednesday at Michigan State University. Dantus' Biophotonic Solutions Inc. has been awarded \$1.4 million in state aid to help turn lasers into viable products.

**At a glance**

Lansing-area 21st Century Jobs Fund awards (company, amount, job creation, purpose)

**Private-sector:**

- AFID Therapeutics Inc., Lansing (\$1.7 million, no jobs): Expansion of pharmaceutical chemistry platform

- Fraunhofer USA Inc.,\* East Lansing (\$322,904, no jobs): Help get new technology and research to market

- KTM Industries Inc., Watertown Township (\$2 million, 66 jobs): Manufacture biobased foam materials

Michigan State University

- MSU researchers received \$13.1 million in grants. See a list of MSU projects on

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the area of the automobile," Gov. Jennifer Granholm said. "We're proud of that history. We also know we have got to enlarge our economy and move into new areas."

In the next year, Dantus expects his company, Biophotonic Solutions Inc., will be able to offer laser analysis to the pharmaceutical industry. The company has eight employees, most of whom work part time.

Within five years, Dantus expects to have 150 employees.

"This is going to go very quickly," he said.

"We're already interviewing this month for our second full-time position."

### **Tough competition**

The 61 funded projects were whittled down from nearly 800 proposals that made a February deadline to express interest in the competition.

Proposals were vetted by scientists from the independent American Association for the Advancement of Science, which scored them and forwarded the "highly recommended" and "recommended" projects to the state.

It would have taken \$137 million to fund all 85 "highly recommended" proposals. Instead, a state board charged with overseeing the competition largely chose the highest scoring.

The board has asked permission to spend another \$37 million for the remaining highly recommended proposals. If approved, the money would come from \$70 million the Jobs Fund has yet to spend through next year.

Officials hope to use some of that \$70 million for a second round of competitive grants and loans.

Having money for a regular competition would help develop an entrepreneurial culture in the state, said David Canter, chairman of the state board that gave out the grants and loans. Canter also is head of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc.'s research operations in Ann Arbor.

"It has to be sustained - going out there and pushing people to come up with great ideas," he said.

Officials also hope the competition will be able to help those that didn't receive grants or loans.

Lansing-area economic development officials already are working to put together a pool of investors to finance some of the promising projects that didn't get awards, said Tim Daman, vice president for economic development at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"It's a terrific opportunity for Lansing to capitalize on," Daman said.

He praised increased efforts by MSU and its faculty to be more involved in such efforts.

### **MSU led field**

MSU had more finalists competing for Jobs Fund grants and loans than any other organization. It was the first time the university has led the pack in seven years of similar state competitive programs.

Its researchers received \$13.1 million in grants, although MSU also is tied to numerous private-sector companies that received funding to further develop university technologies

"I'm really pleased that not only did we have individual projects, but

Total

- Lansing-area awards: \$17.1 million
- Jobs to be created: 185

\* Pending Michigan Strategic Fund approval of and additional \$1.2 million in funding for the competition.

Source: Michigan Economic Development Corp.

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we were partners with other people," MSU President Lou Anna Simon said. "That's an appropriate role for the university - to help people be better."

### Plan for growth

Among the companies linked to MSU, KTM Industries Inc. in Watertown Township was given \$2 million to improve its biodegradable foam operation. It expects to grow from 20 workers to nearly 80 in the next few years.

About \$600,000 will go to MSU for research.


"We're thrilled," said Tim Colonnese, KTM's president and chief executive officer.

Most of the money will be used for equipment upgrades to help KTM meet new orders for its packing material. The company expects to have \$20 million in revenue by 2010.

"The markets have been moving our way," Colonnese said. "We've got some bigger customers that have hit the switch."

Contact Jeremy W. Steele at 377-1015 or [jwsteele@lsj.com](mailto:jwsteele@lsj.com).

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