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WL research 'triangle' sprouting walls, jobs

By [Max Showalter](#), Journal and Courier

With the launch of two successful high-tech companies at Purdue Research Park to his credit, Nainesh Rathod is encouraged by recent progress being made at the 43-year-old home to businesses that deal in ideas, technology and learning.

"I think this area is a cornerstone for growth of the community as a whole," said Rathod, chief executive officer of Imaginestics LLC, a company that was founded in 2002 and specializes in knowledge-based software systems for the manufacturing and life sciences industries.

"The good thing is, we have a diversity of industry, like life sciences, manufacturing and others. I personally think we're going to be one of the premier technology parks in the country -- a model for others in Indiana to follow. This has the chemistry, with Purdue playing a central role in all this."

Established in 1961, Purdue Research Park has grown to approximately 600 acres on the northwest edge of West Lafayette.

The developed portion of the park fills a 250-acre triangle bordered by Sagamore Parkway West, Yeager Road, and Kalberer Road. The remaining 350 acres is mostly farmland.

More than 100 companies employing more than 2,500 people are within the developed portion of the park. The majority of tenants operate in the high-tech arena, where success is not easy to accomplish.

"This is a long-term proposal. If you think it's going to happen overnight, you're in it for the wrong reason," said Joseph Hornett, senior vice president and treasurer of Purdue Research Foundation, which administers the research park.

In 1996, Rathod founded Maxim I/T, a firm that created a technology software program that allows manufacturing businesses to more easily search and retrieve items from their own data files.

Maxim I/T was purchased last year by Product Sight Corp., which moved the company and many senior employees to its corporate headquarters in Bellevue, Wash., a suburb of Seattle.

"The good thing we've seen in the past six or seven years now, is that Lafayette and especially West Lafayette have taken a lot of initiatives," Rathod said. "What really got things going was,

Growth of Purdue Research Park

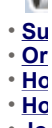
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ANALYZE THIS:

Bruce Burras, 37, a mass spectrometer analyst in Bioanalytical System Inc.'s contract research division, says he enjoys the peaceful environment of Purdue Research Park. (Photo by Frank Oliver, Journal and Courier)

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Purdue saw the successes elsewhere and made a commitment they were going to do this. That's what really made things happen."

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From his second-floor office at Purdue Technology Center, 3000 Kent Ave., Hornett has a ringside seat to view construction of a 60,000-square-foot addition to the building which houses offices for PRF and a host of high-tech and research firms -- many of whom are in the incubator or startup phase.

"As aggravating as (construction) is for people in the building," he said, "it is a clear indication that expansion was needed. We're busting at the gills."

The \$7 million addition to PTC will open during the first quarter of next year, and Endocyte Inc. will immediately fill 25 percent of the space.

Two foreign companies looking to establish operations in North America are considering leasing space in the building.

Endocyte, which conducts leading-edge research on cancer detection and treatment, is among the research park success stories.

It was formed in 1996 and began working in 200 square feet of space in the current PTC. It now occupies a 7,000-square-foot building at 1205 Kent Ave.

The company employs about 30 people and expects to add at least a dozen new jobs, with an average salary range of \$60,000 to \$80,000, when it moves into the larger quarters.

Expansion of PTC is just one of a number of construction projects under way.

Cook Biotech Inc. will cut the ribbon Sept. 10 on a 55,000-square-foot expansion of its facility that develops and manufactures bioengineered medical products from pig intestines. The \$6 million building will allow the company to increase its 80-person work force and has an ultimate capacity of 200 employees.

Bioanalytical Systems Inc. opened a \$5 million, 15,000-square-foot addition to its corporate headquarters on May 1. The pharmaceutical development company has about 180 employees at its West Lafayette location.

The \$5.3 million Allen Chao Center for Industrial Pharmacy is expected to open for business late this year -- manufacturing pharmaceuticals that are in demand but can't be produced at a profit by large drug companies. Purdue students and visiting scholars will be offered opportunities for hands-on production of commercial drugs.

Construction began in June on a 24,000-square-foot building that will house the first phase of the \$6 million International Technology Center. The project eventually will cover 75,000 square feet of the second phase of the research park.

International Sports Clubs is scheduled to open a health club in the first section of the two-story building this fall. The facility will feature wireless Internet access on each of the 50 pieces of cardiovascular training equipment and an Olympic-size swimming pool.

"We're waiting for commitments on the first 25,000 square feet of office space before we commence construction on phase 2," said Stephen Shook, a partner in Research Park Associates LLC, which is funding the project. "We should have word on that in the next couple of weeks. There are several 6,000-square-foot to 8,000-square-foot prospects that we're working on as well."

Progress hasn't always been evident at the research park.

Hornett points to former Purdue University president Steven Beering, vice president Fred Ford and PRF executives Win Hentschel and Jeff Wilson as driving forces during the early days, when developments were hard to come by.

"They are people who believed in a research park long before what you see took place," said Hornett, who credits current Purdue president Martin Jischke with taking the park to a higher level.

"He has clearly made the job of PRF and what we do in the park much easier. He has provided a vision that has gotten a whole lot of people excited, both locally and statewide."

Indeed, the state of Indiana and its highest-ranking politicians recognize the importance Purdue Research Park will play in future Hoosier business and job growth within the "new economy."

Since December, gubernatorial candidate Mitch Daniels, a Republican, and lieutenant governor Kathy Davis, a Democrat, have paid visits to the park.

Gov. Joe Kernan was lieutenant governor in May 2003, when the Purdue facility became Indiana's first certified technology park -- a designation that allows for offering a property tax credit to tenants and creation of a tax increment fund to pay for certain obligations, including acquisition, improvement, demolition and maintenance of public facilities.

The city of West Lafayette allocated more than \$1.5 million last year toward a \$2.4 million infrastructure project, which allowed a 50-acre expansion of the research park. The work included roads, sidewalks, and sewers.

PRF paid nearly \$680,000 toward the cost of the project and donated 25 acres, valued at \$798,000, to the West Lafayette Parks Department for future recreational purposes.

The park has a few amenities, but more are needed, Hornett said, such as on-site child care and a greater variety of restaurants.

"There is an array of services we'd like to provide in the park, including a little more in the way of dining choices," he said.

Most of the current and future growth at Purdue Research Park involves the life sciences industry. Hornett would like to see a couple other high-profile Purdue-related areas of study attract attention, such as agribusiness or agricultural science.

"And clearly we have hopes that developments taking place in Discovery Park will translate into research here at the research park," he said. "The dream of all dreams would have to be landing our first anchor tenant who is capable of developing a campus setting with multiple thousands of employees.

"That would be a home run. That's what we hope for every day that we show up to work. I would hope in 10 years we would be able to accomplish that."

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