Rowan unveils plans for Innovation Center
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Rowan University unveiled plans Thursday for an $11 million Innovation Center, the first building to be constructed at the proposed South Jersey Technology Park at Rowan University.

The Innovation Center will provide affordable rental space as well as technical and business support for startup companies developing new products. The center is expected to foster a climate in South Jersey for high-paying technology-based jobs and provide a forum for research and education.

The Innovation Center will be built on a portion of a 188-acre site on Route 322 near the Route 55 interchange in Mantua, about one mile from Rowan's main campus in Glassboro. Ground will be broken this fall. Plans are for the Innovation Center to open for its first tenants before the end of 2006.

Donald Farish, president of Rowan University, unveiled an illustration of the 45,000-square-foot building before an audience of 100 during a presentation in the Eynon Ballroom on Rowan's campus. A two-story brick-and-glass structure, the Innovation Center was developed by architectural firm Ueland Junker McCauley Nicholson of Philadelphia. The building has a three-story tower that will be illuminated at night.

"It will be literally and figuratively a beacon" for new and existing technology companies, said Farish, who also serves as a member of the board of directors for the technology park.

The center contains wet and dry laboratories, business incubator space, as well as office, conference and exhibit rooms. The structure has been designed for
flexibility and utility, according to lead architect Robert M. McCauley. Prospective tenants are calling about rental space already, according to Jim Stevenson, senior vice president of Lincoln Property Company, Philadelphia, project developer. Firms are attracted to Rowan's business and technical support, as well as the building's proximity to the Route 55 corridor, Stevenson said.

A concept in the making since 1999, the South Jersey Technology Park at Rowan University became a nonprofit corporation in 2001. It is a public/private partnership operating within the university's oversight.

The park's site - land that supported peach orchards for many years - will expand and develop over time. The property has a building capacity of 1.5 million square feet. The technology park will be an integral part of the proposed 580-acre Rowan University West Campus.

"We have no idea how long it will take to achieve the vision you see here - whether that will be 10 years or 20 years," said Farish, referring to the site's overall plan.

Public funding for the technology park's first building includes: a $5.8 million grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, a $5 million investment from the Delaware River and Bay Authority, a $1 million contribution from the Rowan University Foundation, and a $150,000 Smart Growth Planning grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.