

ON CENTENNIAL CAMPUS, FUTURE BEGINS TO BLOOM



Natalie Godwin, 20, left, and Nikki Player, 21, juniors at N.C. State University, work at a hand loom at the College of Textiles on Centennial Campus. STAFF PHOTO BY CHUCK LIDDY

By TIM SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

From its earliest days, Centennial Campus was called the future of N.C. State University — a “technopolis” where faculty would work shoulder-to-shoulder with private researchers and government agencies.

Most North Carolinians had no idea what that meant. Next week, Centennial Campus celebrates its 20th birthday. It is home to dozens of sophisticated research projects and numerous partnerships between faculty members and local companies.

And most people in North Carolina — including those who live just a mile away on NCSU’s main campus — still have no clue what’s happening there.

“I’m not really sure what they do,” said Ryan Sharp, a junior who was eating lunch recently at NCSU’s Talley Student Center. “You just don’t hear about it much.”

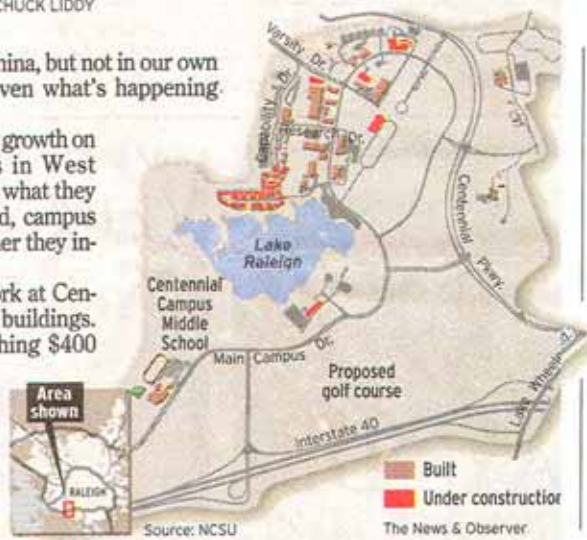
This doesn’t surprise David Winwood, director of Centennial Campus. It does make him sigh a bit.

“They know us in Beijing, China, but not in our own back yard,” he said. “But given what’s happening here, that won’t last.”

What’s happening is startling growth on the campus of 1,100 acres in West Raleigh. Instead of explaining what they intend to do with all that land, campus leaders are being asked whether they intend to develop it all.

More than 2,700 people work at Centennial, scattered among 21 buildings. Total investment is approaching \$400 million. More than 2,000 students attend classes there — a number that’s expected to double next year when the College of Engineering

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20 YEARS

There is no formal date when Centennial Campus was christened. To mark its 20th anniversary, however, NCSU officials are holding an open-house celebration Tuesday at the new Partners III building from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. Dessert will be served.

CENTENNIAL CAMPUS THROUGH THE YEARS

Born from years of discussion in the 1970s, Centennial Campus began to take shape in 1984, when Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt set aside 385 acres to establish a new kind of university center for N.C. State University. Today, the main Centennial Campus covers 1,100 acres with more than 100 companies, government agencies, research centers and university classrooms. Slow to develop at first, the campus has marked the past 20 years with these additions.

1985: Republican Gov. Jim Martin sets aside 485 additional acres, creating the bulk of today's campus boundaries.

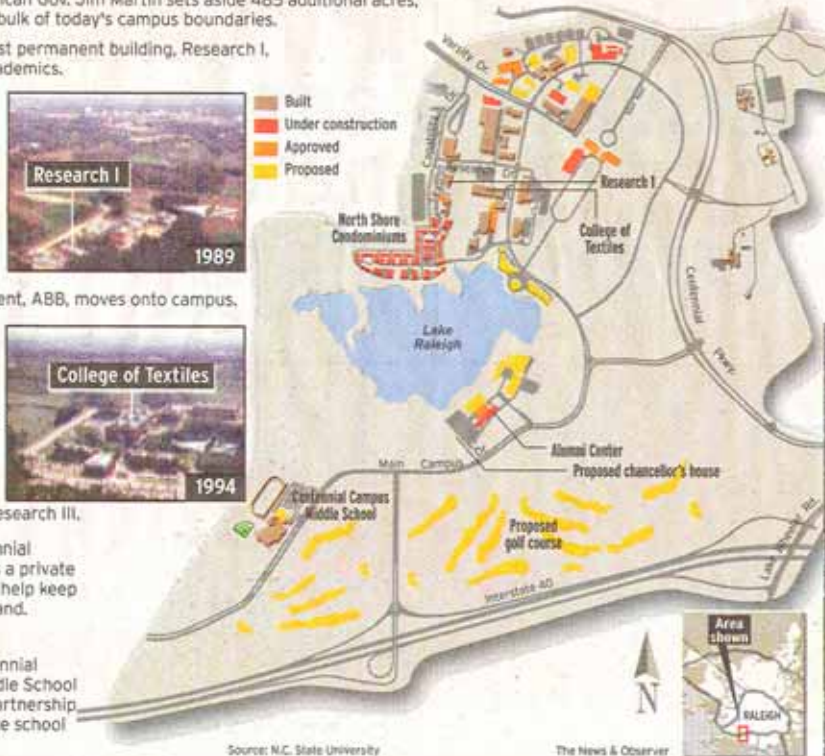
1988: The first permanent building, Research I, opens for academics.

1991: The College of Textiles becomes the first college to use the campus as its home. The first corporate client, ABB, moves onto campus.

1993: The National Weather Service becomes the first government partner on campus, locating in Research III.

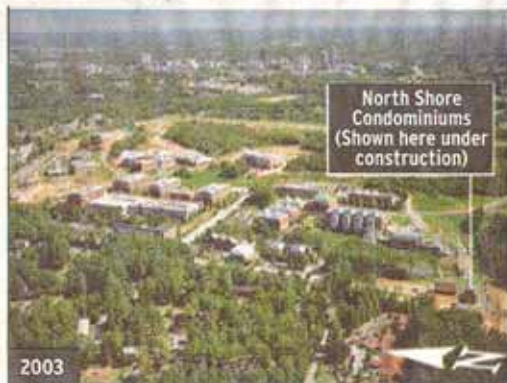
1999: Centennial Campus uses a private developer to help keep up with demand.

2000: Centennial Campus Middle School opens in a partnership with the Wake school system.



Source: N.C. State University

The News & Observer



2005: North Shore Condominiums become the first residential units available on campus.

2006: A new alumni center is planned overlooking Lake Raleigh. A new chancellor's residence is planned next door.



Future expansion: Fund raising continues for a new golf course, eventually to be complemented with a hotel, conference center and numerous academic and research buildings.

(Computer generated image shown at left.)

CAMPUS

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brings undergraduates to the campus. Five building projects are under construction, and five more have been approved.

"You've really got a good thing going there," said Karen Holbrook, the Ohio State University president who is working with others on a similar idea in Columbus, Ohio. "The numbers, the data, the anecdotes — it all suggests more success to come. Plenty of universities would love to have their own Centennial."

But few would be willing to follow the somewhat tortured path that is part of Centennial's history. In that regard, today's shiny buildings are like a recent bloom on a long dormant plant.

"I can see the difference just since I started working here in 2002," said Tyler Williamson, an NCSU student.

ing campaign still has a way to go. Planners also are resolute about eventually building a hotel and conference center, even though their first effort was derailed by tourism and private hotel interests.

"A conference center would be a great asset," said Kevin Gard, an assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering. "It would allow us to offer larger seminars for private industry. It would give people a place to gather, a reason to visit the campus."

Their own rules

Those who envisioned Centennial — such as former Govs. Jim Hunt and Jim Martin and former Chancellors Bruce Poulton and Larry Monteith — were never looking to build a research island.

In many ways, Centennial Campus was as much concept as proposal — a grand experiment

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shaped by politics, perception and the economy. The university could not force people to be its partner. It could not force others to pay for its dreams.

"Everybody loved the master plan when we showed it to them, but when we sat down with the bankers, people just sort of looked down at their feet and squirmed a little," said George Worsley, former vice chancellor of finance at NCSU. "So we decided to do it ourselves by our own rules."

The first rule was that every building must have an academic purpose. The research interests of faculty, business and government

had to match.

For three years, nothing happened. The first two buildings — belonging to the College of Engineering and the College of Textiles — were entirely academic.

It wasn't until 1991 that ABB Power moved onto campus. That year, the National Weather Service agreed to lease space for a forecast center.

By 1992, Monteith ordered a new master plan reflecting the slower pace of development.

Breakthroughs

For people such as Gilligan who

were close to the project, success seemed imminent after the Weather Service committed. But it was eight years before that success was obvious to others.

In 1999, three buildings went up in quick succession — followed by a dozen more in the next five years. Centennial was suddenly a hot address.

From textile research used to make fireproof jackets to genomic science and bioinformatics, new programs and research breakthroughs have been announced in batches the past five years.

The impressive run was underscored when the university decided to use NCSU's College of Veterinary Medicine as the anchor for a 214-acre Centennial Biomedical Campus. The decision quickly increased the college's share of federal grants and cemented its national standing.

"It helps to be good, and it helps to be lucky," Wigwood said. "Centennial is a good example of that."

WHO KNEW?

Things you probably didn't realize:

1. Not-so-willing tenants: The year before the College of Textiles broke ground on its new \$31 million building on Centennial Campus, the faculty voted unanimously against the move.

2. Disciplines most people don't understand, Take I: Research in advanced materials at Centennial includes diamond films for semiconductor electronics, atomic layer epitaxy and "super fibers" for textiles.

3. From a distance: Centennial Campus Middle School is considered an important partner with the university, but you can't get there from here because the main road running through campus isn't done yet.

4. Disciplines most people don't understand, Take II: Research in advanced communications technologies at Centennial includes computer chip design, bioinformatics and digital signal processing.

NCSU senior who is a technical writer for a software mapping company. "It's not so much like an office park anymore."

Place to work, for now

Centennial, which was named to help mark the school's 100th anniversary, doesn't look much like a college campus either.

Outside of business hours, the buildings and sidewalks are eerily quiet. Even during the day, the place doesn't exactly bustle on the outside.

Most employees arrive in the morning and are gone by late afternoon. A monorail was once discussed to link Centennial to NCSU's traditional campus, but that is still little more than a wish. The students, most of whom are

older and working on graduate degrees, often drive to class.

And while a small condominium complex offers a place to live on campus, it's a pricey option at more than \$200,000 a unit.

"This isn't a place yet where people work, live and play," Winwood said. "Mostly, they work."

The abundance of red brick buildings, while generally appealing, has left some people wondering whether this is the best face that NCSU can offer.

During a recent review of a proposed building known as the Bio-manufacturing Training and Education Center, NCSU Trustee Richard Robb suggested that university leaders take a second look at campus aesthetics.

"We start with a clear sheet of paper — 1,000 acres that tells the world who we are," Robb said. "I'm just asking that we not drop the ball."

Trustee Wendell Murphy was more blunt about the building.

"Can we make some changes?" he asked. "It looks like a prison."

As a vice chancellor who oversees research programs, graduate studies, fund raising and recruitment of new businesses, John Gilligan isn't likely to compare a Centennial Campus building to a prison. But he appreciates the desire to make Centennial feel more warm and welcoming.

"We've got to find ways of making it more of a home by offering things such as sporting events, libraries and places to gather," he said. "We aren't there yet."

School leaders hope a proposed golf course will fill some of that need. But a \$16 million fund-rai-



'PyroMan' gets torched at the College of Textiles. The mannequin enables researchers to test textiles against high heat indexes. PyroMan is indicative of the research conducted at Centennial.

STAFF PHOTOS BY CHUCK LIDDY



A student crosses the brick-covered entrance of the Engineering Graduate Research Center on Centennial Campus.

to be lucky," Winwood said. Centennial Campus was both."

NCSU leaders often can't contain their enthusiasm about Centennial — so much so that they occasionally feel obliged to remind people that they have no intention of leaving the old campus behind. But with almost two-thirds of Centennial still left to develop, it's clear their focus has shifted there.

A 56,000-square-foot alumni center overlooking Lake Raleigh is scheduled to open at Centennial this year. A new \$3 million home for NCSU's chancellor — paid for with private money — is planned for next door. More condos are planned for 2006.

For people such as Gard, the electrical and computer engineering professor, the explanation is obvious.

"It's the best of both worlds," he said. "If people don't have an impression of Centennial before they arrive, they certainly do when they leave."

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5. Corporate apprentices: About 300 students hold internships with corporate partners.

6. Only just begun: Centennial's building is just getting started. Once finished, the campus could host as many as 12,500 corporate and government employees, a similar number of faculty, staff and students, 7,000 residents and 600 middle school students.

7. Disciplines most people don't understand, Take III: Research in biotechnology at Centennial includes RNA structure analysis, genomic science and recombinant DNA techniques.

STAFF WRITER TIM SIMMONS

CENTENNIAL WANNABES

Other public universities in North Carolina have Centennial Campus-like research campuses under development:

UNC-CHAPEL HILL — A master plan has been completed for Carolina North, a research park planned north of the main UNC-CH campus. A nearly 1,000-acre tract was bequeathed to the university years ago by philosophy professor Horace Williams. The university plans a mix of labs, offices, homes and stores on the property. But development has been stalled by the status of Horace Williams Airport, an airstrip on the land, and zoning negotiations with the town of Chapel Hill.

UNC-CHARLOTTE — In 2000, the university established the Charlotte Research Institute, planned for 100 acres carved out of the main campus. Construction is under way on several buildings, which will include classrooms and lab space for business partners. The institute will focus on four main areas — precision manufacturing, optoelectronics, e-business technology and bioinformatics.

UNC-GREENSBORO AND N.C. A&T STATE UNIVERSITY — The two universities in Greensboro will create a joint "millennial" campus on the site of the former Central N.C. School for the Deaf. The campus, called the Greensboro Center for Innovative Development, will be on two sites with combined space of 150 acres. One site will target the needs of school systems, industry, health care and social agencies in the Triad. The other will be a science research park. The land was given to the campuses by the state in 2003.

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY — The campus in Cullowhee recently acquired 334 acres of property across the highway from its main campus for a Millennial Initiative, a regional economic development project. The acquisition more than doubles the campus' size.

STAFF WRITER JANE STANICILL