

March 2009

# Robotics P A R K Report

## ROBOTICS PARK BOARD

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**Dr. Marilyn Beck**  
Calhoun Community  
College  
(Decatur/Huntsville)

**Mr. Ed Castile**  
AIDT (Montgomery)

### Ex Officio

**Governor Bob Riley**  
State of Alabama

**Mr. Bradley R. Byrne**  
Chancellor  
Alabama Community  
College System

**Dr. Matthew Hughes**  
Director  
Governor's Office of  
Workforce Development

## Groundbreaking Held for Robotics Park

Over 400 area business and industry representatives, elected officials, educators, students and others interested in the project joined Alabama Governor Bob Riley, State Board of Education member Mary Jane Caylor, Alabama Community College System Chancellor Bradley Byrne and members of the Robotics Technology Park Executive Board on December 10 for the official groundbreaking of Phase I. As keynote speaker for the event, Riley noted the significant importance of the Park to the state's economy.

"I can't think of another project in my administration that I am more excited about," Riley commented. "We are going through a tough economic time that most adults have never seen before. If we are going to continue to have the same economic

success we have had over the past years, we are going to have to stay on the cutting edge of technology," the Governor added. He ended his remarks by saying that Robotics Park will be one of many ways the state of Alabama will be an economic leader not just in the south, but for the entire country.

Calhoun President Marilyn Beck noted the significance of the event. "Today is truly an historic day for Calhoun, this community, this great state and indeed this nation," Beck said.

A robot provided by the AMTEC Company participated in the groundbreaking by handing off shovels to Riley and members of the Executive Board as well as lifting its own shovel of dirt.





### Executive Board Conducting Monthly Meetings; Progress on Park Continues

Since December, members of the 9-member Robotics Park Executive Board have held monthly meetings to discuss the progress of the Park. Final drawings for Phase I of the Park have been presented by the architects. Plans are for the bid process to begin soon to select a general contractor for the building. Site prep has already begun for Phase I; construction should begin within the next few weeks.

As has been reported, the Robotics Park will consist of three separate facilities, each targeted to meet a specific industry need. Governor Riley first proposed the robotics campus in 2006.

Robotics manufacturers pledged to provide \$42 million worth of robots for the robotics campus during a meeting with Governor Riley in September. Representatives from 12 robotic companies were brought together with Governor Riley by AIDT and agreed to also help design different elements of the campus.

Calhoun President Marilyn Beck pledged to utilize the college's resources to make the Governor's vision a reality. "Calhoun has become known as one of the leaders in education in our region, and this new robotics campus will definitely take the college to the next level," Beck commented

AIDT Director Ed Castile said, "This robotics complex is a major part of Governor Riley's vision for Alabama in his quest for our state to be the world leader in manufacturing technology, continued research and development of cutting edge robotics technology, and the mecca for companies that want to be leaders in their respective markets." Castile has appointed Rick Maroney from AIDT to coordinate the Robotics Park project.

The robotics campus will consist of three individual training facilities each targeted to a specific industry need.

**Phase 1:** The **Robotic Maintenance Training Center** will house an industry training program. **Phase 2:** The **Advanced Technology Research and Development Center** will feature a test facility for companies currently in the robotics manufacturing industry. **Phase 3:** The **Integration and Entrepreneurial Center** is expected to be a collaborative consolidation of technology involving higher education and industry.

Phase I is a 40,000 square foot facility where technicians will be trained to work on robotic machinery. It will be staffed by trainers supplied by top robot builders. The first plant will be home to several major robotics and automation brands and each will have a significant space for training and product demonstration. Construction for this first phase is expected to take approximately 18 months, and funding for the building is already in place. Local municipalities and county governments have pledged a total of \$4 million for Phase I. The Morgan County Commission presented its \$1 million check for the project to Calhoun last year. The Limestone County Commission and the cities of Athens and Decatur will each add \$1 million. Calhoun has committed \$3 million for the Park's first phase from the college's general fund budget.

The second facility will be used by NASA and the U.S. Army Missile Command for the purpose of research, development and testing of leading edge robotics used for military projects and space exploration. The structure will have appropriate infrastructure to support these activities with substantial outdoor areas for testing in a variety of environments. Initial plans were for the building to be 25,000 square feet, however, the size could increase based on the level of interest from potential occupants and vendors.

Phase III of the robotics campus will allow companies to build and adapt robots for new industries. Start up plants will be able to set up manufacturing lines to integrate software and equipment, test systems and train maintenance and production staff.

All three buildings will have an investment of approximately \$71 million including robotics equipment. With state funding tight due to the downturn in the economy, Phases II and III could benefit from President Obama's stimulus package. Calhoun President Beck has submitted requests for \$7.8 million for Phase II and \$7.2 million for Phase III through the Department of Postsecondary.

