

Officials gather for MCLA's new Center for Science & Innovation groundbreaking

By Jennifer Huberdeau, North Adams Transcript

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NORTH ADAMS -- With ceremonial shovels in hand, state, local and college officials celebrated the official groundbreaking for MCLA's Center for Science and Innovation, marking the start of construction on the single-largest investment in public higher education in Berkshire County.

Gov. Deval Patrick, who was on hand for the festivities with Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray, championed the \$30 million center, part of a \$54.5 million project that is an important part of his administration's growth strategy, which he said has already helped the state add jobs faster than 44 other states in the country.

"This project hits right on every chord of our growth strategy -- a strategy based on education, on innovation and on infrastructure," he said. "We are investing in each of those areas through this project, which helps to extend and enrich the innovation economy at this end of the commonwealth and enrich the lives of these students and the life of this campus."

Funded with \$54.5 million allocated in Patrick's 2008 higher education bond bill and \$1.7 million from MCLA for furnishings, the project includes the \$30 million three-story Center for Science and Innovation to be completed in 2013 and \$24.5 million in renovations for Bowman Hall, where the college's math, computer science and sociology departments, along with its robotics program and a Geographic Information System lab, will be housed.

Patrick said that

while the growth strategy has already brought jobs and new innovative industries to the majority of the

state, the Berkshires had yet to experience similar growth -- a problem which the new science center will help to rectify.

"That strategy needs to be felt in every corner of the commonwealth, especially in our beloved Berkshires," he said. "This project is an investment in young people and in young minds, in middle-aged people and middle-aged minds and in all sorts of people who are hungry for the innovation and skills development. It's an investment in innovation, because it supports innovative economy in this part of the commonwealth, that is booming in other parts. It is unglamorous but important infrastructure investment and a long time coming."

President Mary K. Grant, who received numerous accolades for her vision and perseverance in pushing for the science center, said the week had been filled with science, as the college had just seen its application for a new chemistry major advance before the state Board of Higher Education.

"This marks the first academic building to be built on this campus in 40 years," she said, during a formal presentation inside the MCLA Church Street Center prior to the groundbreaking. "I'm a graduate of this college, and I'm proud to say that I think some traditions should be broken."

Grant also thanked the many individuals at the college and in state government for making the science center a reality, noting that former state Reps. Peter Larkin and Daniel Bosley and former Mayor John Barrett III were among those in the audience who had helped make it a reality.



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Bosley, who was brought up to the podium by state Sen. Benjamin Downing, D-Pittsfield, and asked to speak on behalf of the Berkshire Legislative delegation, said that making the science center was a priority both personally and politically.

"A lot of opportunities would have been foreclosed to me without my education at [MCLA]," he said. "When John Barrett III and I were first elected, he as mayor and I as a city councilor, Sprague Electric announced they were leaving. With them went 36 percent of the city's workforce. I still hear people in this city say that they want manufacturing jobs to return. In reality, it's not manufacturing jobs, its value-added jobs they want. This center will bring those value-added jobs to the city and to the region."

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