

## Innovative Ideas- North Carolina State

**Category:** Research, Teaching, or Public Service

**Project Name:** NC State Economic Development Partnership

**The Idea:** As a research-extensive land grant university, North Carolina State University (NC State) has historically delivered significant economic and social benefits by delivering knowledge and technology-based solutions to government, industry, and the private sector. Building on this tradition, NC State's Economic Development Partnership (EDP) was established in early 2003 to proactively link the unique multi-disciplinary resources of the University with industry, government and communities to foster economic growth.

**Project Execution:** The EDP connects university faculty and extension personnel, industry leaders and the economic development community to foster higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs and new investment in both urban and rural North Carolina while simultaneously growing academic programs (teaching, research and extension), particularly in the global arenas of nonwoven, bio- and medical textiles.

NC State's Precision Marketing Initiative (PMI) with Wake County Economic Development is the unique (and replicable) partnership responsible for these accomplishments. The PMI pairs economic developers with University faculty (and other partners) to address the technology, workforce, product development and production needs of firms within targeted industry clusters, simultaneously strengthening existing firms while attracting new firms to the State. By proactively addressing the needs of cluster firms, North Carolina becomes better positioned not only as a center for innovation and new product development, but also as the logical place for manufacturing new high-value products.

This PMI seeks to implement the five-year regional economic development plan entitled *Staying on Top: Winning the Job Wars of the Future* (co-winner of the U.S. Department of Commerce's 2004 Regional Competitiveness Excellence in Economic Development Award), which directs regional entities to support the growth of key emerging industry clusters. Funds for NC State's Precision Marketing Initiative with Wake County Economic Development (WCED) come from direct University support of the Economic Development Partnership Director and staff, from a \$100,000 per year grant from the Wake County Board of Commissioners, and private sector dollars raised for local economic development initiatives.

**External Impact:** The project directly links the assets and interests of the university with those of the economic development and business communities. In its first year of implementing the Precision Marketing Initiative, the EDP and WCED, working with NC State's college of Textiles and its Nonwovens Cooperative Research Center (NCRC) identified more than 300 nonwoven, bio- and medical textile companies around the world for possible collaboration and recruitment resulting in six active expansion and relocation projects. Fifty companies are now identified as priority collaboration and recruiting targets. WCED, NC State, and private sector partners have routinely formed "landing parties" to attend, present at and recruit firms at international nonwoven/medical textiles and medical device conferences.

These one-of-a-kind University-based resources and supporting precision marketing strategies have resulted in new companies joining and tapping the innovation and product development resources of the NCRC, and international companies such as Spuntech (Israeli), Freudenberg (German), and Vescom (Dutch) locating to rural and urban areas of the State. Since its inception, the EDP and its partners have contributed to over 3,000 new or retained jobs via corporate expansions and relocations for North Carolina.

Wake County Economic Development recently received the First Place Award for the Precision Marketing Campaign during the International Economic Development Council's (IEDC) 2006 Annual Conference. "Competing in the category of General Purpose Promotion by organizations serving areas with populations exceeding 200,000, WCED submitted three marketing pieces used to target innovative textile companies with established relationships with North Carolina State University's College of Textiles. These pieces served to educate the companies on the resources available and recruit them to place research and development or manufacturing facilities in the region."

**Internal Impact:** The EDP and its economic development partners are happy to discuss the process and lessons learned with colleagues from other campuses.

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