

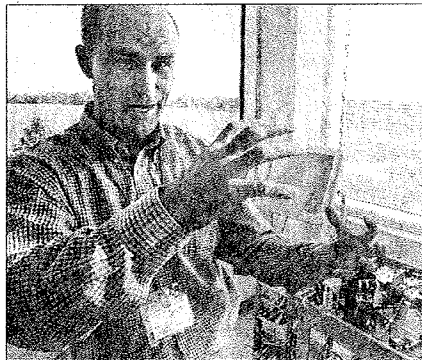


AKIRA SUWA / Staff Photographer

Rowan University professor Tom Merrill (second from right) discusses a project with (from left) his wife, engineer Denise Merrill; engineer Jennifer Docimo; and engineering student Tony KaBarck in their lab in the new technology park.

At Rowan, rooms for improvements

The university's new innovation center gives ideas a place to grow — locally.



Merrill's latest project is designed to cool the cardiac tissues of heart-attack patients. His start-up business, FocalCool, is housed in the new Samuel H. Jones Innovation Center.

By Cynthia Henry
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

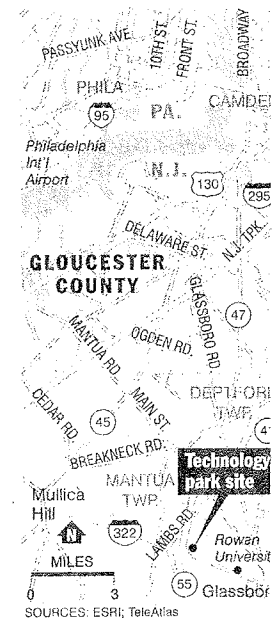
Tom Merrill, a professor of mechanical engineering at Rowan University, used to incubate inventions in his partially finished Mercer County basement.

Son James and daughter Kate acted as lab assistants on the latest project, while wife Denise, also an engineer, worked an intricate drill to shape a catheter they hope will someday save stroke and heart-attack victims.

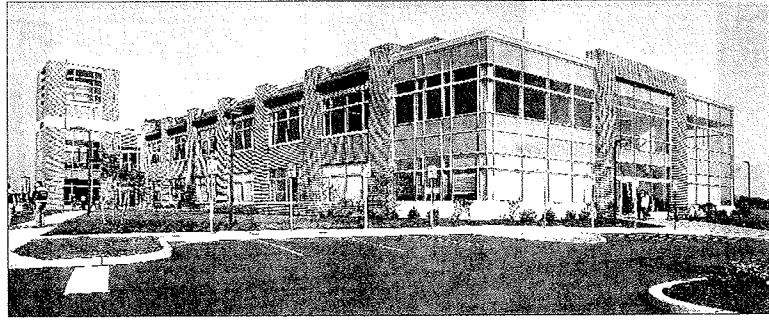
Yesterday, they were all smiles setting up their fledging start-up business, FocalCool, in a spacious new laboratory at Rowan's Samuel H. Jones Innovation Center. It's the first building in the university's 200-acre South Jersey Technology Park, just off Routes 322 and 55 in Mantua Township.

"It's phenomenal," said Merrill, who is developing a device to cool heart tissue after an attack. "I have student resources, the cream of the crop."

FocalCool was one of 14 government- or privately funded laboratories dedicated yesterday on the first floor of the \$10 million, See **ROWAN** on B3



SOURCES: ESRI; TeleAtlas
MIKE PLACENTRA / Inquirer Staff Artist



AKIRA SUWA / Staff Photographer

The Samuel H. Jones Innovation Center is the first phase of a technology park that Rowan University officials hope will be an incubator for businesses in South Jersey.

Rowan dedicates new center for technology

ROWAN from B1
45,000-square-foot building. Rowan announced that the second floor will house the Educational Information and Resource Center, a nonprofit agency specializing in programs for parents, schools, communities, nonprofit organizations and private businesses throughout New Jersey. It's now in Washington Township.

Also opening upstairs next spring will be a Challenger Learning Center, a simulated NASA space mission for middle schoolers created in memory of the astronauts who died in the 1986 shuttle accident.

The success of the tech park, eventually envisioned as 25 buildings with 1.5 million square feet, depends on "the Rowan connection," executive director Thomas J. Drury Jr. said.

"Real estate is all about location and price, but we also have access to the university's professors, students, business planning and marketing resources," said Drury, a venture capitalist and former president of a public technology company in Princeton.

Those assets attracted tenant Physical Acoustics of Princeton, which, among other monitoring, tests bridges for cracks and corrosion, its director of national sales, Terry Tamutus, said. It

formed a partnership with Rowan's Shreekanth Mandayam, an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering.

Mechanical engineering senior Todd Nilsen of Brick Township was excited about the leg up that the research and development would give him in the job market.

"There are things you're just not going to learn in classes — ordering equipment, calibrating sensors," said Nilsen, who works with Merrill. He and another student are working on their own start-up proposal.

"That's the idea," said Joe Cardona, director of university relations. "We want businesses moving in and out."

Professors and graduate students are studying a variety of topics: clean energy, automotive technology, nanotechnology, pavement analysis, and product life cycles. Their funding comes from government sources such as the National Institutes of Health, NASA, and the National Science Foundation, or corporations such as Pfizer.

The new laboratories offer more space for large equipment than the main engineering building a mile and a half away, said Nydia Ruiz-Feliz, a second-year graduate student from Guadalajara, Mexico. Ruiz-Feliz and four other aspiring chemical engineers said that with 500 engineering undergraduates and 60 graduate students, the main building gets loud and congested.

Henry and Betty Rowan donated \$100 million to what was then Glassboro State University in 1992 with the condition that it establish an engineering school. The first class of about 100 freshmen be-

gan in 1996, and the main campus building opened two years later.

But university president Donald Farish said that as the school grew in size and reputation, the university realized something was missing — an incubator for research, businesses and jobs. Most graduates had to seek jobs outside the region.

Today, Rowan has about \$10 million in sponsored research yearly, compared to about \$130 million at Drexel University, Drury said.

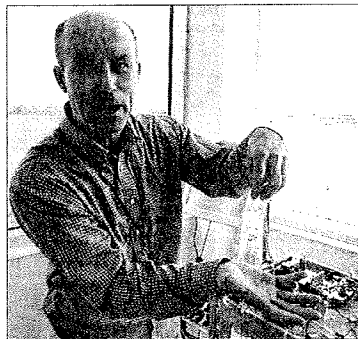
As the university acquired about 580 acres along Routes 322 and 55 in Mantua, Harrison and Glassboro to build a west campus, it decided to split its uses — north of 322 for the technology park and south for regional athletic fields, retail and student housing. Everything but the new tech building remains in the long-term planning stages.

In 2006, ground was broken for the first technology building, financed with \$5.8 million from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, \$1.5 million from the New Jersey Commission on Science and Technology, \$1 million from the Rowan University Foundation, \$1 million from businessman Samuel H. Jones of Mantua, \$500,000 from the U.S. Small Business Association, and \$150,000 from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

A second building has been designed and would be financed by borrowing on the first structure. Drury said he hoped the economy would recover about the time construction was finished.

Despite the economic downturn, Drury expected the park, incorporated separately from the university, to proceed.

"In five years, we should have three buildings up," he said.



Tom Merrill, a professor of mechanical engineering at Rowan, used to have to work on his projects in his basement.

Contact staff writer Cynthia Henry at 856-779-3970 or chenry@phillynews.com.