



NEWS

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Bulk Solids Innovation Center to be Built in Salina, Kansas, USA



Salina, Kansas, USA (September 27, 2013) - Kansas State University is planning a new facility in Salina, Kan., that will benefit companies that design and utilize systems for bulk solids. Examples of bulk solids are loose, dry commodities or such ingredients as sugar, starch, minerals, chemicals, pigments, fillers, plastic resin and recycled plastics.

The center will be used to study and increase the understanding of bulk solids materials handling, in turn enhancing the competitiveness of those businesses that use bulk solid materials or manufacture the systems that convey, store and dispense them. Unlike liquids and gases, the science of dry bulk solids is not thoroughly understood.

Primary partners in the projected \$3.5 million, 13,000-square-foot facility are Kansas State University, the Salina Chamber of Commerce, Salina Economic Development Corporation and several private companies. The facility will be called the Kansas State University Bulk Solids Innovation Center.

The university will be the key tenant in the center with various offices and research suites for permanent and visiting researchers, companies and other users. Two local companies, K-Tron and Vortex Valves, will be initial anchor tenants, conducting both their own research as well as collaborative research with the university.

The building will include open and enclosed lab areas to allow for collaborative and proprietary research projects by the building's tenants. The open area will also allow for the more exploratory/open access research conducted by university investigators and students. It is envisioned that this area will also act as an open innovation center where the university and industry can work together on projects.

The center will incorporate K-State faculty expertise from technology, engineering and agriculture programs. It will focus on the process industries of plastics, foods and chemicals and will complement the College of Agriculture's Bulk Solids and Particle Technology Lab and program housed on the university's Manhattan campus.

The project will use both public and private sector resources, including a \$1 million-plus grant through the Economic Development Assistance Programs of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Such grants are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities.

Support is forthcoming from the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Salina Economic Development

Incentive Council, Kansas State University and the private sector facility users. Support includes funds for construction, land, donated fixed equipment and operating expenses.

"The center is another vehicle for Kansas State University to engage with industry by doing what it does best, and that's offering solutions and answers based on the best research," said Richard Potter, director of corporate engagement for the university.

"The construction of this facility will allow the Kansas State University Salina campus to take a major step forward and contribute to K-State 2025 by connecting industry with education," said Verna Fitzsimmons, CEO and dean of K-State Salina.

Kirk Schulz, Kansas State University president, said that part of meeting the university's goal to become a Top 50 public research university by 2025 will be nurturing and broadening the university's relationships with industries.

"What is so exciting about the Kansas State University Bulk Solids Innovation Center is how it will enhance our Salina campus's access to applied research for industry," he said.

A facility and programs for bulk solids research are greatly needed, said Todd Smith, general manager of K-Tron Salina and vice president of K-Tron Global Systems. Very few bulk solid research centers exist in the world and this would be the only university-level research center for bulk solids in the United States.

"Industry leaders all over the country recognize that formal education and research in this area are lacking, and they need the improvements that this center can bring," Smith said. "A number of them already have research projects in mind, and they like the idea of having an independent center where they can send their materials for analysis and recommendations. Having Kansas State University lead the center is a great way to get the results we need."

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