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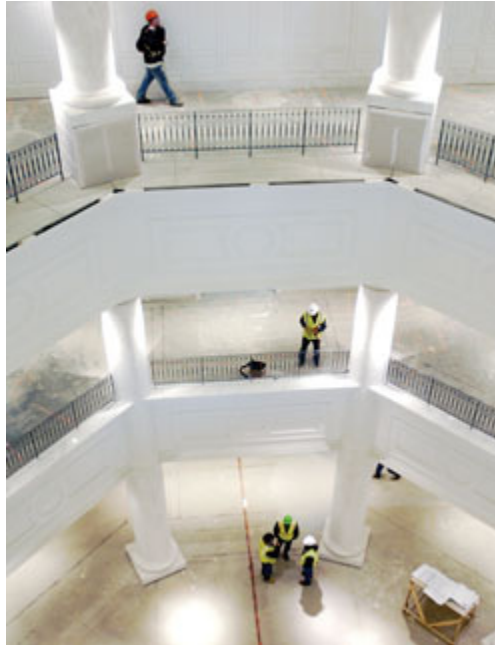


Core Research Lab set to open in April

By Ben McNeely

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Construction crews work inside the Core Lab of the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis on Wednesday.

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KANNAPOLIS - The Core Research Laboratory is expected to open in April.

Dole Food Co. owner David Murdock said he would host a grand opening celebration then to show off the centerpiece of the North Carolina Research Campus.

Murdock met with construction managers with Turner Construction this week to make sure they were on schedule for an April opening.

While the grand opening may be in April, the scientific equipment will still be moving in to the 311,000-square-foot building through the summer. Steve Leath, president of the David H. Murdock Research Institute, said the plan is to start moving in the advanced scientific equipment into the lab in the spring, so it will be ready for researchers when they begin arriving this summer.

The 950-mHz nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer - the crown jewel in the core lab's equipment array - will be installed in April as well. In the basement of the core lab, where the NMR will sit, there is a 15 foot hole in the side of the building that is boarded up. Construction workers will bring the two-story-high supermagnet through that opening and install it on the special floating floor. Castle & Cooke president Lynne Scott Safrit said a technician with Bruker BioSpin will spend a year at the core lab, calibrating the NMR and making sure everything runs smoothly.

Inside the core lab, workers are installing Italian marble on the walls and floors in the 80-foot-high, four-story atrium, preparing the lab spaces for tenants to move in and testing the brass-door elevators. The second and third floors will be lab space for tenants to rent out, as well as the office suite for the Murdock Research Institute, Safrit said. The fourth floor will be the institute's lab space.

Capping the atrium at the top is a dome that, right now, is painted with a coat of primer. Murdock has commissioned two artists from India to paint a mural on the dome that tops the four-story atrium.

"One of these artists painted my name on a grain of rice," Murdock said. "I wanted to do something different for the dome."

The design of the mural will be something with fruits and vegetables, Murdock said, although, he said that he has not decided on a final design.

"I've made changes about 20 times," Murdock said.

The artists will work on an 80-foot hoist and platforms in the dome while they complete the mural.

As for partner companies that might be coming to Kannapolis, Murdock was tight-lipped.

"Some of them are slow-moving," Murdock said. "But we can't talk about that right now."

Murdock and his team - Safrit, Andrew Conrad and Clyde Higgs - have been talking with Fortune 100 companies about partnering with the campus. Some names that have been floated are drug maker Pfizer and technology companies like Google, Microsoft and IBM. Murdock has even talked with talk show host and better living matron Oprah Winfrey about partnering with the campus.

"She has visited the campus, but nothing has been signed, so I can't talk about that," Murdock said.

Conrad, Murdock's science adviser, said there would be big announcements at the grand opening in April.

"April is going to be a big month for us," he said.

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