

KANNAPOLIS - The N.C. Research Campus has got a new tenant on the way.

President Barack Obama signed the FY 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill Wednesday -- which included \$1 million to establish a U.S. Department of Agriculture human nutrition research center in Kannapolis.

"The Nutrition Center will be home to ground-breaking research that will make our communities healthier," U.S. Rep. Larry Kissell said in a statement. "This research can help us to better understand exactly how nutrition impacts our health as well as bring new jobs to our area."

Kissell originally asked for \$500,000, which passed the U.S. House over the summer. Then Sens. Richard Burr and Kay Hagan added \$500,000 more to the appropriation. The full amount passed the U.S. Senate in August.

This is a piece of welcome news for the research campus, which has seen construction grind to a halt because of economic conditions and a partner company -- Wilmington-based contract research organization PPD -- leave in May.

The Agriculture Research Service, the research arm of the USDA, would use the funds to hire staff to establish the center in the Core Research Laboratory. It would be the seventh center dedicated to human nutrition the USDA operates in the country -- the largest one being in Beltsville, Md.

Campus developer Castle & Cooke and the City of Kannapolis have been lobbying to have a federal presence in Kannapolis since Dole Food Company owner David Murdock announced the research campus in 2005.

"It's incredibly gratifying to see direct investment in research by the federal government," said City Manager Mike Legg. "We think this is a nice foot in the door and there is plenty of room for growth. This is not the end to the pursuit of this presence, but the beginning."

North Carolina has a significant investment in the research campus, through funding research institutes through seven campuses of the UNC system. In the budget approved by the General Assembly in August, the research campus will be seeing \$3 million in FY 2010 and \$3 million in FY 2011, bringing the state's total recurring investment in the research campus to \$22.5 million.

The state also is supporting Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and its biotechnology training programs. RCCC's building is currently under construction at the campus.

Earlier this month, Murdock told the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce retreat in Pinehurst that three more buildings will begin construction in November.

"The arrival of the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center to the N.C. Research Campus will long be remembered as a benchmark in fulfilling the mission of the campus to transform nutrition, agriculture and human health to benefit mankind," Murdock said in a statement.

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