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OU, Tulsa firm make headway on 3-D tech

By APRIL MARCISZEWSKI World Staff Writer
5/2/2006

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A collaboration between the University of Oklahoma and Tulsa-based 3DIcon Corp. has begun to produce fruit in the form of two preliminary patent applications and several more applications in the works.

OU officials see the partnership as a model to replicate. Companies pay professors and students to conduct research, the university licenses the technology to the companies, and the two share the profits.

In this case, OU researchers are digging into 3DIcon CEO Martin Keating's vision of society-altering technology.

Picture a glass or plastic box, 18 inches cubed, Keating said. It will contain a proprietary medium that will render three-dimensional images in motion.

Jewelers will be able to travel and display simulations of their wares without toting -- and insuring -- the pricey pieces, he said.

The dealers will merely travel with the glass box and a DVD showing the jewelry. The simulations will look like the real objects.

Imagine the Super Bowl on your coffee table. A Beatles concert re-created from old films. A real-estate industry in which buyers visit vacant lots with simulated houses.

Keating sees applications for the technology in the military, video games and telemedicine -- for 4,700 industries, in fact.

He is in charge of money issues and marketing; OU's job is to create 3-D images that viewers can see without needing funny glasses.

Jim Sluss, director of OU's School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, expects to have a prototype built and on display for the public by late August.

He, faculty members Pramode Verma and Monte Tull, recent doctoral graduate Hakki Refai and doctoral student Erik Pet-rich have worked with 3DIcon for about two years, and they are discussing continuing the relationship for at least several more years, Sluss said. The optical engineering and imaging project is anchored at OU-Tulsa.

Keating said he is glad to keep his idea in Oklahoma.

Dan Davis, OU's associate vice president for technology development, said this type of partnership can help companies grow, resulting in more high-paying jobs for college graduates. It can help keep business-, science- and technology-trained graduates in the state, and it can boost Oklahoma's economy.

Davis said he expects this collaboration to encourage similar relationships, in which OU becomes the research and development department for industry.

"It's making industry aware that this talent is at the university," he said.

Sluss said the setup also gives students real-world experience, in addition to graduate-level research credit, and provides summer employment for professors.

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