

NMSU attracts defense contractor

PSL chief says 30 new jobs could turn into more than 300

By TODD G. DICKSON
The Las Cruces Bulletin

Defense Research Associates Inc., an Ohio-based company that develops defense-related technologies, recently opened an office at New Mexico State University's Physical Science Laboratory.

DRA has collaborated with PSL for about four years, according to an NMSU release, on the development and testing of technologies for unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly referred to as UAVs. The university held a reception June 18 for the opening of the company's new Las Cruces in PSL's Anderson Hall at the corner of Stewart and Espina streets.

Jay Jordan, PSL dean and director, said DRA's work is expected to add 30 new jobs in the near future, with a potential of that increasing to more than 375 jobs if the company is successful in landing certain defense contracts.

"The opening of this office will enhance our collaboration with New Mexico State University in the development of sense-and-avoid technologies for unmanned aircraft," said DRA President Roy Anderson. "We are excited to be establishing a presence in Las Cruces, and we expect our New Mexico operations to grow to about 30 high-tech jobs over the next two to three years."

Besides working with NMSU, the Las Cruces area "is about to explode," Anderson said. "This is a technologically strong growth area, and we want to be part of it."

NMSU President Michael Martin said the company would eventually move its local operations into the university's Arrowhead Park as it expands. He described the arrangements as "another good partnership" between the university and a private company.

Las Cruces Mayor Pro Tem Dolores Connor agreed, saying that every success at NMSU somehow helps the local community.

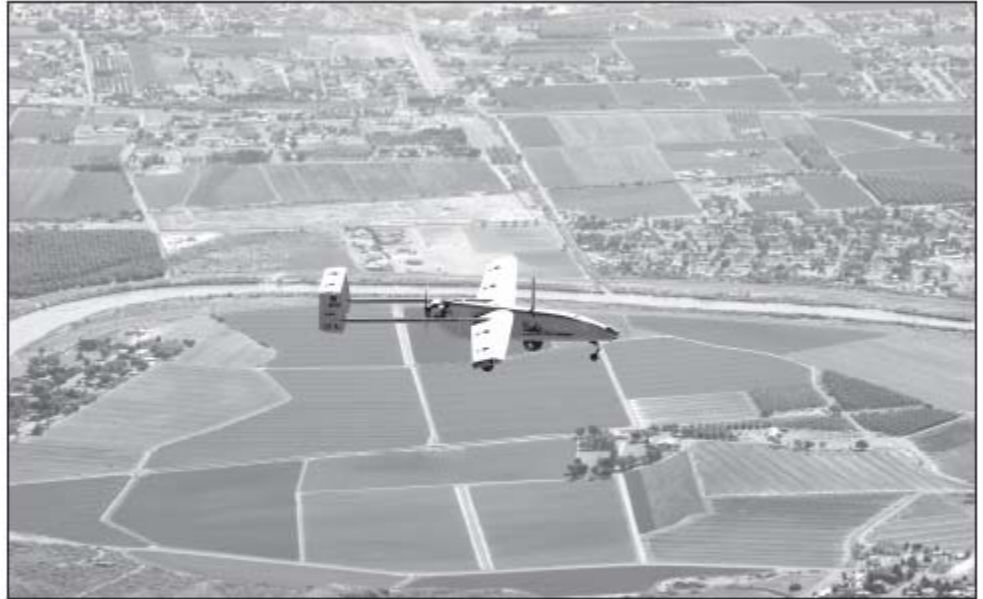
Martin said NMSU students would get to work with "cutting-edge activities in defense research" and internship opportunities could easily turn into long-term employment.

Anderson promised to hire NMSU students in co-op positions.

"It most certainly contributes to our outreach mission of engagement and economic development," Martin said.

DRA employs about 75 people at its headquarters in Beavercreek, Ohio, near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, according to the NMSU press release. It also has offices in Indiana, California, Alabama, Florida and Washington, D.C.

"At our Beavercreek, Ohio, facility we currently have 15 former part-time students who have graduated and now work for DRA full time," Anderson said. "DRA uses



NMSU-PSL 1 For the Las Cruces Bulletin

New Mexico State University Physical Science Laboratory Aerostar unmanned aerial vehicle flies over the Rio Grande and the Mesilla Valley during a test flight. Defense Research Associates, which has worked with PSL on the UAVs, recently announced it was opening a permanent office at NMSU.

local engineering schools and utilizes students as interns, in part-time roles on developmental programs. This model has been used to add more than 50 high-paying jobs in Ohio over the last six years, and we will continue this concept in New Mexico."

At NMSU, DRA's PSL office initially will be staffed with one full-time employee and two NMSU student employees, with other DRA employees spending part of their time in Las Cruces.

DRA and NMSU have jointly participated in more than \$6 million of initiatives funded by

“
This is a
technologically
strong growth
area...
ROY ANDERSON,
DRA President
”

the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) and NAVAIR, the Naval Air Systems Command. NMSU is a teammate on a \$1.7 million OSD-funded Technology Transition Initiative to reduce the size, weight, power requirements and cost of sense-and-avoid systems for application in smaller UAVs.

DRA teamed with PSL's Technical Analysis and Application Center (TAAC) to compete for and win a 10-year, \$51 million AFRL contract for the Passive Electro-Optical/Infrared Threat and Target Detection Technology (PETAD) Program for developing sensor systems. The contract was

awarded in January.

NMSU is the only non-federal entity with a Certificate of Authorization from the Federal Aviation Administration to operate unmanned aircraft systems in the National Airspace System, according to the NMSU press release. That has allowed NMSU to test DRA equipment on its Aerostar UAV.

DRA's Las Cruces office is located in Rooms EB 202 and EB 204 of Anderson Hall. The telephone number is 646-7076. More information about DRA can be found on the company's website, www.dra-inc.net.