



## MSU, Department of Energy sign agreement for FRIB

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## Mich. gas prices highest in nation, could go higher

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## Potter Park Zoo to host event, proceeds go to rhino exhibit, more at [lansingdown.com](http://lansingdown.com)

### JOBS

## IBM'S NEW E.L. FACILITY EMPLOYS MSU GRADUATES

By Kayla Habermehl  
THE STATE NEWS

Big Blue got a dose of green and white as the first group of MSU graduates started work at the new IBM facility in East Lansing this past Monday.

Of the 36 people hired, 15 are related to MSU, with nine being 2009 graduates and six being past graduates, said Garth Motschenbacher, director of employer relations in MSU's College of Engineering.

The MSU graduates will be developers and coders, which are entry-level positions. Senior-level employees are IBM employees brought in from other sites, Motschenbacher said.

The IBM Global Delivery Center for Application Services is the first center of its kind opened by IBM in the U.S. The center is located on the second floor of the MSU Federal Credit Union at 600 E. Crescent Road.

Motschenbacher said it's a good starting point for recent graduates. He said many will stay anywhere between 18 months to three years at the East Lansing location before moving to other jobs, whether within IBM, for the state of Michigan or for other technology companies.

"It's good news for everybody," he said. "It's a marquee name, an American company that is opening and providing opportunity in the area and what it means for graduates to expand and learn through IBM."

The center is expected to hire 1,500 people during the next five years.

Xulu Zhang, a 2009 MSU graduate in computer science, started at the facility last week. He said the size of the company allows for a wide range of experiences.

"(With) IBM or being as big as it is and in all sorts of types of industries, I'd be able to work on basically anything I wanted to," he said.

He said working at the center allows him to stay close to friends.

"It keeps me close," Zhang said. "I learned to love it (in East Lansing) over the past few years."

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MSU researchers have found Facebook is beneficial to students who use it. The social networking Web site allows students to maintain stronger contact with many friends throughout the U.S. and world.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN COOK/THE STATE NEWS

# Social Science

MSU largest Facebook research center among Big Ten universities; team researches how people use site

By Brittany Shammass  
THE STATE NEWS

Posting on someone's wall or adding pictures from the latest bash is more than Facebook fun — it's a field of study for a team of MSU researchers. The university has one of the largest research teams studying Facebook use in the Big Ten. The team, which is composed of about 12 people, also was one of the first university research groups of its kind, said Nicole Ellison, one researcher and an assistant professor in the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media. Its study of Facebook began in 2005, one year after the site launched.

"You have a medium now where there isn't really a whole lot of experience — Facebook is only a few years old," said Charles Steinfield, one of the researchers and chair of the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media. "So it's one of these things where we need to assess it carefully, to know the long-term impacts of these technologies."

Why does it matter?  
Social networking sites

such as Facebook are changing the way students interact with the Internet, said Cliff Lampe, another researcher and an assistant professor in the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media. Research has indicated the amount of time spent on Facebook has doubled within the past year and more people use Facebook than e-mail services, he said.

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"It's like a social lubricant, or if you can think about someone's Facebook as a collection of icebreakers."

Nicole Ellison,  
MSU Facebook  
researcher

### U.S. SENATE

## Clunkers might garner vouchers

By Meredith Skrzypczak  
THE STATE NEWS

Your old beater sitting in the driveway might be worth more than you thought.

Clunkers cars might soon generate thousands in cash for those willing to trade them in for fuel-efficient models.

The Drive America Forward Act, more commonly known as Cash for Clunkers, is being debated in the U.S. Senate. The legislation is being sponsored by U.S. Sens. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and Sam Brownback, R-Kansas. If it becomes law, owners of trade-in vehicles would be eligible for a \$4,500 voucher payable to the dealer for a fuel-efficient vehicle, if the trade-in car meets specific requirements.

The vehicle must be in a drivable condition, manufactured in

### Clunker trade value

The highest voucher amount is \$4,500.

A \$3,500 voucher is awarded if a new vehicle is 4-9 miles per gallon better than the trade-in.

Vehicles that are 18 mpg or fewer could be traded for ones that are at least 22 mpg.

A \$787 billion stimulus package will provide the funding for the legislation.

SOURCE: U.S. SENATE  
model year 1984 or later and have a combined fuel economy of 18 miles per gallon or fewer. If the new car is more than 10 mpg better than the trade-in vehicle, the driver will receive the full \$4,500 voucher. If the new vehicle is between 4 and 9 mpg better than the trade-in, the driver will receive \$3,500.

Car owners still would need to make up the difference in cost after their voucher is received.

"It provides incentives to help people on Main Street purchase new vehicles from their local dealers," said Matt Williams, Stabenow's spokesman, in an e-mail. "It will remove less fuel-efficient vehicles from our roads, helping to reduce pollution in the environment."

The legislation, as proposed, will be in effect for one year, which is a good start, said Charles Territo, spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

"At this point, it is obvious that something needs to be done to

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### EAST LANSING

## City Center II project up for 4th extension

By Kate Jacobson  
THE STATE NEWS

A \$16 million redevelopment project will be up for its fourth extension at tonight's East Lansing City Council work session.

The City Center II project, which is a mixed-use project slated for the corner of Abbot Road and Grand River Avenue, is scheduled to be discussed at the 7 p.m. meeting at City Hall, 410 Abbot Road.

The council aims to discuss giving the City Center II developer, Strathmore Development Co., a 90-day extension to secure the remaining \$28 million needed for the project. City officials said they think the developer is asking for the extension because of

the turbulent economy.

"The commercial credit markets are frozen," City Manager Ted Staton said. "No one can borrow money anymore. It's exceedingly difficult to finance commercial market."

Strathmore President Scott Chappelle said the company has secured \$84 million of the \$112 million it is providing for the project. The city is pitching in the remaining \$4 million.

Chappelle said he expects to secure a commitment for the remaining \$28 million in the next 90 days through a loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mayor Vic Loevis said Strathmore has had problems acquiring funds for a while, but this is not unusual for a project of this scale during the current economy.

"I think the majority of people

understand that we're in some pretty tough economic times and I think most people understand that this project, like similar projects, are awaiting financing," he said.

The new deadline to secure funding with the extension would be Sept. 28. The developer plans to start demolition of the Citizens Bank building and the surrounding properties in the fall.

Also on the agenda for the work session is a change to a city ordinance regarding handguns that was adopted in February.

On Feb. 17, the council approved amendments to the city code in order to change handgun laws to adhere to current state laws. Because of a typographical error in the ordinance, the council plans to review the revised bill

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