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RESEARCH

## Stimulus funds help boost MSU grants, awards since June 2009

By Zane McMillin  
THE STATE NEWS

MSU is looking to maintain gifts, grants and other awards after the total number received by the university increased by about \$42 million during the past year.

The university received 1,967 awards totaling \$298.7 million from June 6, 2009, to Jan. 29, according to a report presented to the MSU Board of Trustees at its Feb. 12 meeting.

MSU received 1,582 awards totaling \$262.2 million during a similar time frame from 2008-09.

A combination of factors — including federal stimulus funds — and an increased number of grant proposals by MSU researchers

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ACTIVISM

## 4 SPARTANS TO VISIT D.C., TALK FUTURE OF ENERGY

By Kate Jacobson  
THE STATE NEWS

Four MSU students are headed to Washington, D.C., on Tuesday to discuss clean energy with some of Washington's elite.

Political theory and constitutional democracy sophomore Ashley Hall, comparative cultures and politics sophomore Liz Starke and no-preference freshmen Josie Bradley and Kyle Varner won the 2009 Conscience Campaign's Organize to Be Heard Challenge, a competition designed to encourage college students to get involved in the clean energy movement by raising awareness about clean energy.

The four students helped form

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# NATURAL SELECTION

Future MSU research site will allow users to apply evolutionary principles to current-day applications.



KAT PETERSEN/THE STATE NEWS

Carpenters Tim Crawford, left, and Joe Desonia, assemble metal support beams Monday during renovation of the room that was once the library in the Biomedical and Physical Sciences Building. The space will house MSU's newest science facility, Bio/computational Evolution in Action CONsortium.

By Zane McMillin  
THE STATE NEWS

About 150 years after Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" was published, MSU researchers are poised to break new ground in the study of evolution. During his time, Darwin only could dream of understanding the "how" and "why" of evolutionary principles, said Charles Ofrin, an associate professor of computer science and engineering.

Now, Darwin's vision might be realized after MSU received a \$25 million grant last week from the National Science Foundation, or NSF, to potentially transform the study of evolutionary principles.

Announced Feb. 17, the Bio/computational Evolution in Action

CONsortium, or BEACON, project will deviate from traditional methods of studying evolution by applying evolutionary principles to future biological and non-biological applications.

"We're working with concrete things in front of us, right now," said Erik Goodman, a professor of electrical and computer engineering. "We're learning principles, what does work, what doesn't work and those ideas can be applied by looking at evolution."

BEACON also will allow researchers from different fields to collaborate and answer complex scientific and

societal issues, Ofrin said.

"Often when you think about the field of evolution, it's hard to think of it in terms of an experimental science," Ofrin said. "And we want to change that mindset."

### Evolution science

Since Darwin's time, the study of evolution primarily has focused on examining fossil records and mapping genetic sequences back in time to discover the "when" and "where" of evolution, Ofrin said.

BEACON will stray from the traditional model of studying historical evolution and

instead will apply evolution's principles to present-day applications, Goodman said. Biologists, for example, will collaborate with computer scientists to digitally map evolutionary sequences, drawing similarities between biological and digital processes, such as viruses in computers and humans.

"We're looking at evolution in action; evolution going on in the world today," Goodman said.

With BEACON, researchers will be able to utilize evolution to help solve societal problems

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Ⓚ To see a video of the BEACON's evolutionary software in action, visit [statenews.com/multimedia](http://statenews.com/multimedia).

# 4 candidates run for Ingham County Commissioner

Elections for Ingham County Commissioner will be held from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Tuesday, and with the Ingham County Board of Commissioners charged with bringing spending in line with expenditures, the budget will be a primary responsibility for whoever is elected for the partial term that expires on Dec. 31, 2010.

### Bob Alexander, Democrat

A two-time runner-up to U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, for the 8th District Congressional seat, Alexander, 65, has the most campaign experience of those in the race.

"Others have done good things but have been out of the public eye, and people don't know what they've done and they've done some good things," said Alexander, who is co-chairman of the Mid-Michigan Coalition for Health Care Reform. "It gives me a big advantage."

Alexander has been active in the East Lansing community, particularly with MSU students. Alexander primarily wants to preserve the Ingham County Health Plan for low-income people, which he has helped formulate since 2003. Given budget constraints, he said the plan that covers 16,000 county residents is in jeopardy and he wants to invest it from the chopping block.

### Peter Dewan, Democrat



Dewan, 50, has served all over the East Lansing and Lansing communities, making him one of the more locally well-rounded candidates in the race. Dewan was a member of both the East Lansing Zoning Board

and Planning Commission for six year terms, has volunteered with the Glencairn Neighborhood Association and is a former MSU Downtown Coaches Club board member. "I've had the benefit from experiencing the East Lansing community from a variety of perspectives," Dewan said. He was a legislative assistant and has worked in the insurance industry setting up risk management programs. Dewan said his main focus would be how to make the most of declining county revenues, but his long-term goal would be to attract investment and jobs to keep MSU graduates in the East Lansing area.

### Penelope Tsernoglou, Democrat



As a 2004 MSU College of Law graduate, Tsernoglou, 30, has been active in local politics for the past eight years. Now a sales manager for East Lansing-based Practical Political Consulting Inc., 220 Albert

Ave., and a public defense attorney for Ingham County, Tsernoglou will take her years of volunteering for the Democratic Party, voter registration drives, county courts, county sheriff's department and animal control to the campaign trail. "I'm probably the person who has reached out most over the years to get students involved in our community and in voting and in deciding who would be elected in other elections," she said. Tsernoglou said she hopes multiple smaller changes can solve the county's budget situation rather than a few large-scale reforms. She advocated expanding specialty courts — such as sobriety and domestic violence courts — and alternative sentencing.

### Lee Reimann, Democrat

As an attorney with Willingham and Coté, P.C., 333 Albert Ave., as well as a certified public accountant, Reimann, 47, said she would be the ideal person to help the county solve its budget mess. "Financial issues are what I deal with — I feel I have the skills and talent to help the county navigate the next couple of years in terms of getting expenditures in line with revenue," the Thomas M. Cooley Law School graduate said. Although Reimann has no political experience, she said her residency in Ingham County motivated her to run for the position considering how many services are under fire. Reimann said she is not political by nature, which she added will aid her in the capacity to balance the budget without any distractions from a future political career. She said maintaining the level of services provided by the county health department and the court system are her two highest priorities, and other areas must be cut to preserve those areas.

—Compiled by Zack Colman, The State News