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## Anderson's banner effort

**Flagship Enterprise Center** boosts entrepreneurship as city bounces back from the loss of auto jobs

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It's entirely possible that Hoosiers soon will drive electric cars with nanoparticle batteries, have their car seats adjusted continuously for better comfort, and then park those cars in garages they ordered off the Internet.

Those are just a few of the ideas being pursued by entrepreneurs at the **Flagship Enterprise Center** in Anderson.

The **center**, a joint **effort** of the city of Anderson and Anderson University, opened in 2005 with the goal of attracting new and more diverse businesses to the area.

It's a ray of hope in a city battered by the loss of 27,000 auto industry jobs since the late 1970s, as is Forbes magazine's recent ranking of Anderson among the 100 Best Small Places for Business and Careers. That apparent contradiction isn't surprising to **Flagship** President and Chief Executive Charles Staley.

Staley, who runs the Office of Engagement at Anderson University, says the electrical expertise of many former employees at auto industry businesses such as Delphi Automotive Systems Corp. and Guide Corp. offers the seeds for entrepreneurship. Although they have lost their jobs, they are filled with business ideas, skill and an overwhelming desire to work, Staley said.

"There's this incredible entrepreneurial spirit in Indiana," said Arthur Patterson, Flagship's executive director. "Entrepreneurs have lots of ideas. They are full of passion. What they need is structure. . . . We want to tap into that passion and those ideas to help them become independent, viable businesses."

The **Flagship Enterprise Center** is housed in a 40,000- square-foot building just off I-69 that provides various kinds of structure and support to fledgling

entrepreneurs: It helps raise startup money, provides consultants to work out business plans and offers inexpensive office or manufacturing space.

Some clients operate off-site but still may use the facility's teleconferencing facilities and meeting rooms.

One company making use of the **Flagship** facility in a big way is Nevada-based Altairnano, which opened in the **center** in 2005. It produces and tests nanotechnology battery packs for automobiles.

Altairnano's Anderson site manager Dave Lynch, a former Delphi electrical engineer, said he and a small group of other former Delphi colleagues became interested in Altairnano after seeing the company's display at an industry show. Not long after that, the group reached an agreement with Altairnano to produce automotive battery packs that can be recharged quickly and in cold weather.

It's just one example. But Patterson is confident about the future.

"It is a process, and it doesn't happen overnight, but in 10 years you're going to see a very different Indiana," he said.

So far, **Flagship** has had enough success to warrant construction of a 55,000-square-foot addition that will house an education **center**, including classroom space for Purdue and Anderson university students beginning next fall.

"It will be one of the few places where you can earn your degree and go across a hall and apply it (to practical use). That's an exciting concept," Staley said.

**Flagship** also plans to open a 70,000-square-foot business accelerator just down the block from the **Enterprise Center** on June 1. The accelerator will offer low-cost office and light industrial space for startup companies.

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