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## MSU's new isotope accelerator can energize state's future

You don't have to understand nuclear physics to grasp that Michigan State University and the State of Michigan got some monstrously good news Thursday about something called a rare isotope accelerator.

Just know that this is a really big deal and the best thing to happen to these battered peninsulas in a long, long time.

The \$550-million research facility that the U.S. Department of Energy decided Thursday to install at MSU will make East Lansing the home of cutting-edge research on everything from energy to medicine and serve as a beacon to attract top scientists from around the world.

The DOE's choice of MSU over the Argonne National Laboratory west of Chicago also creates "a beacon of hope for the State of Michigan," MSU President Lou Anna Simon said.

That's for sure. At a time when Michigan's economy is in relentless freefall and the Detroit-based auto industry is getting pounded on a daily basis in Washington, this development flies in the face of the state's rust belt image. It's about the 21st Century and beyond. It's about the "next Michigan" that until Thursday appeared to be decades away.

MSU officials who have been pursuing this project since 1996 said the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams -- hence the banner "Bring FRIB to Our Crib" seen at MSU football games this fall and at President-elect Barack Obama's campaign rally on campus in October -- would be built within 10 years. An analysis by the Anderson Economic Group said it would generate about \$1 billion in economic activity and 400 jobs.

MSU already is home to a National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory, which does related research and submitted the FRIB proposal to the federal government.

The science and technology involved are hard to grasp for people not educated in it. Suffice to say it will enable researchers to address profound questions about the structure of things and atomic reactions that are essential to scientific progress on many fronts. It's a safe bet that breakthroughs of enormous benefit to humanity 15-20 years from now will have their origins in work that begins in the FRIB.

And the opportunity to be part of that will make MSU a global destination for inquiring minds.

You have to be glad for the school and for Michigan. What a glorious day to Go Green.