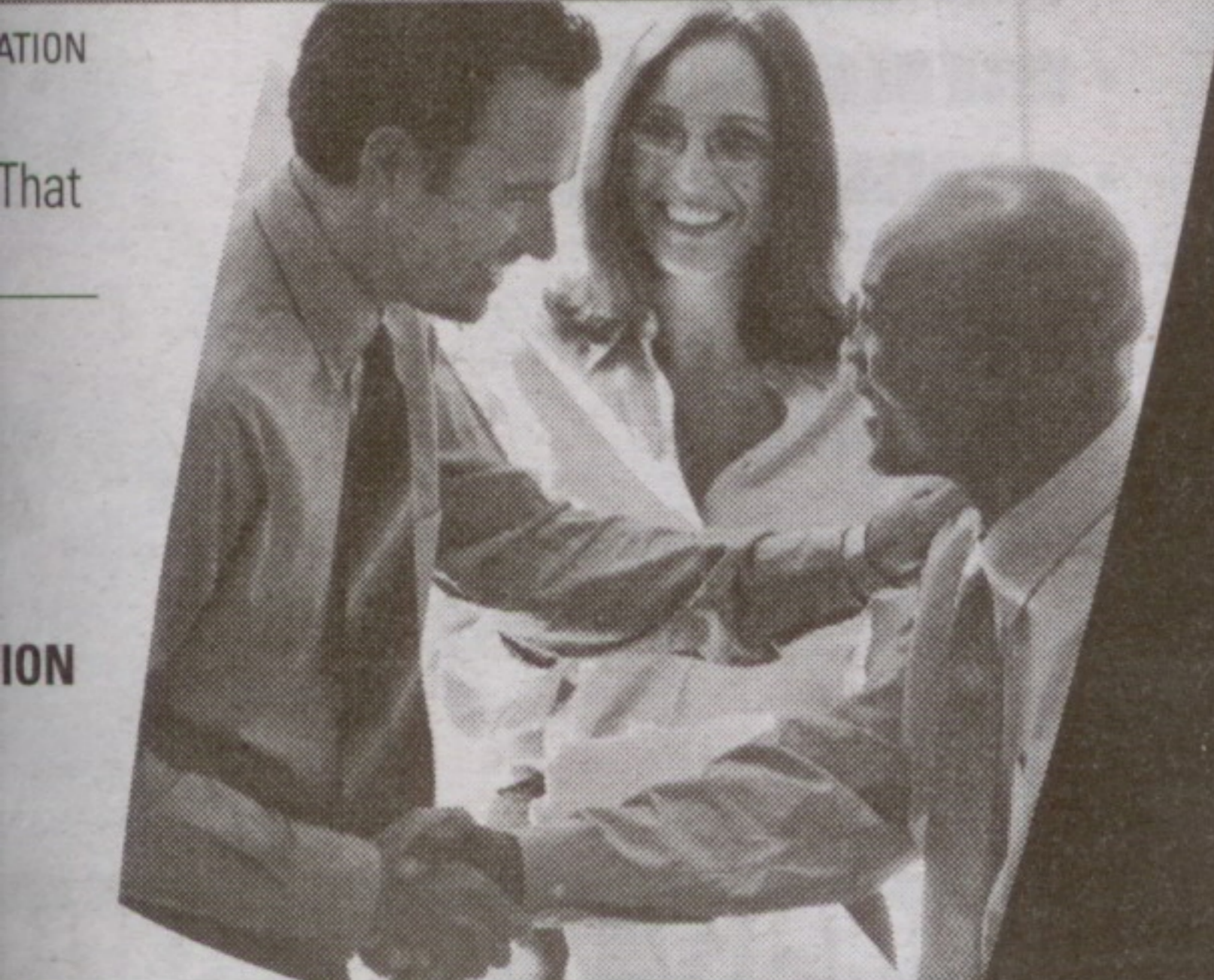


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I wonder why
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't do things the
Kelchner does."

Construction Supervisor, Turner Construction

UD optics program assists in \$10M deal

Program has 45 graduate students

■ BY SUZELLE TEMPERO

DBJ STAFF REPORTER

The University of Dayton's electro-optics program, which has gotten more than \$2 million in recent grants, has helped a local division of L-3 Communications keep 10 jobs in Ohio and net more than \$10 million in contracts.

Andrew Sarangan, an assistant professor of electro-optics at UD, partnered with the Mason-based division of New York City-based L-3 Communications Holdings Inc. to land its first Third Frontier grant in 2003. The \$773,000 grant was for commercializing mid-wave infrared camera technology.

That technology is now in production and started being sold earlier this year by the 400-employee division. L-3 Communications Corp. is a publicly traded company that had 2005 revenue of more than \$9.4 billion.

"UD's award was among the smallest in Ohio and we've done much more than we expected," Sarangan said, noting UD has a state-of-the-art laboratory and 45 graduate students — including 10 women — in the program. "This is a three-year project and we've done it in just more than two years. That's not a bad return on investment."

In 2004, Sarangan received another grant, worth \$1.1 million, through Ohio's Third Frontier Program, which is the state's 10-year, \$1.6 billion program to invest in high-tech companies and research. The second fund was for expanding the technology into other areas of infrared imaging, specifically employing long-wave infrared technology to improve visibility in foggy or smoky conditions.

The primary market is currently government and military applications, which use the infrared camera lens in fire fighting, border patrol, and search and rescue operations in nighttime conditions.

However, John Devitt, engineering manager with the Mason division, Cincinnati Electronics, said expanding the technology's applications is drawing interest from flight and automobile manufacturers. Devitt said Honda and other manufacturers are looking to incorporate L-3's infra-

red camera into its cars. The technology gives the driver a wide-screen view of the road ahead by projecting infrared images onto the windshield, superimposed over what is normally seen.

"Most of this stuff that does get commercialized is initially driven by government applications," Devitt said. He added that by partnering with UD, L-3 was able to develop its product and hit the market at an accelerated pace, as well as keep at least 10 jobs here that likely would have moved to other offices.

Sarangan agreed, adding that finding money for commercialization is often difficult or next to impossible, so the state technology development program is a key resource.

"Third Frontier bridges that gap and allows you to move an idea from the lab to the marketplace," Sarangan said. "(There's) not much money for that type of effort."

Devitt declined to speculate on future contracts or employee growth related to the project, but said the company has the sense there is "good potential" from the interest piqued so far.

Sarangan added that though it's too premature to say for certain, there is a possibility that the infrared technology could spin-off another company locally. The environment is ideal with the UD resources and trained local workforce, he said. Sarangan said a point of pride for the program is that most of its graduates stay in the Dayton-Cincinnati area, taking advantage of employment opportunities with L-3 or the U.S. Air Force.

The collaborations between industry and academia are really paying off, said Merle Madrid, spokesman for the Ohio Department of Development, which manages the Third Frontier Program. He said that to date, \$325 million of the program's funds have been allocated and about 1,500 jobs have been credited to its efforts. Stories like the UD partnership with L-3 are becoming increasingly common as many projects mature faster than had been expected, Madrid said.

"(It's) just the tip of what we believe is going to be a lot more success and job creation and product collaborations between universities and companies in Ohio," Madrid said. "We see Third Frontier as the next step to encourage inventions and investment in high tech fields in Ohio."

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