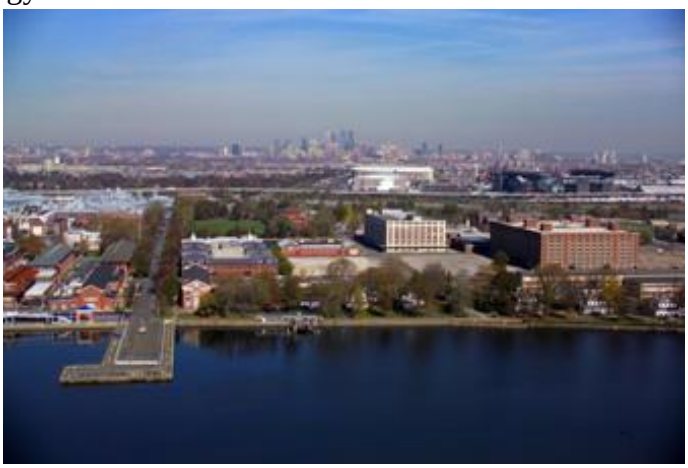
President Obama Visits Research Facilities in the Penn State Department of Architectural Engineering

On Thursday, Feb. 3, 2011 President Barack Obama was on the Penn State University Park campus to visit with Penn State faculty and researchers regarding the University's role as the lead partner of the Energy Innovation Hub.



The Department of Energy has launched three Energy Innovation Hubs across the nation focusing on Fuels from Sunlight, Nuclear Energy and Energy Efficient Buildings. Penn State will provide overall leadership for the Greater Philadelphia Innovation Cluster (GPIC) for energy-efficient buildings, located at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia (shown right). Dr. James Freihaut, Associate Professor of Architectural Engineering is the technical director for the DOE Hub, which involves 11 academic institutions, two DOE laboratories, five high-profile global industry partners, regional economic development agencies, and community colleges. During his visit, Obama focused on the importance of work being done at the Energy Innovation Hub at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

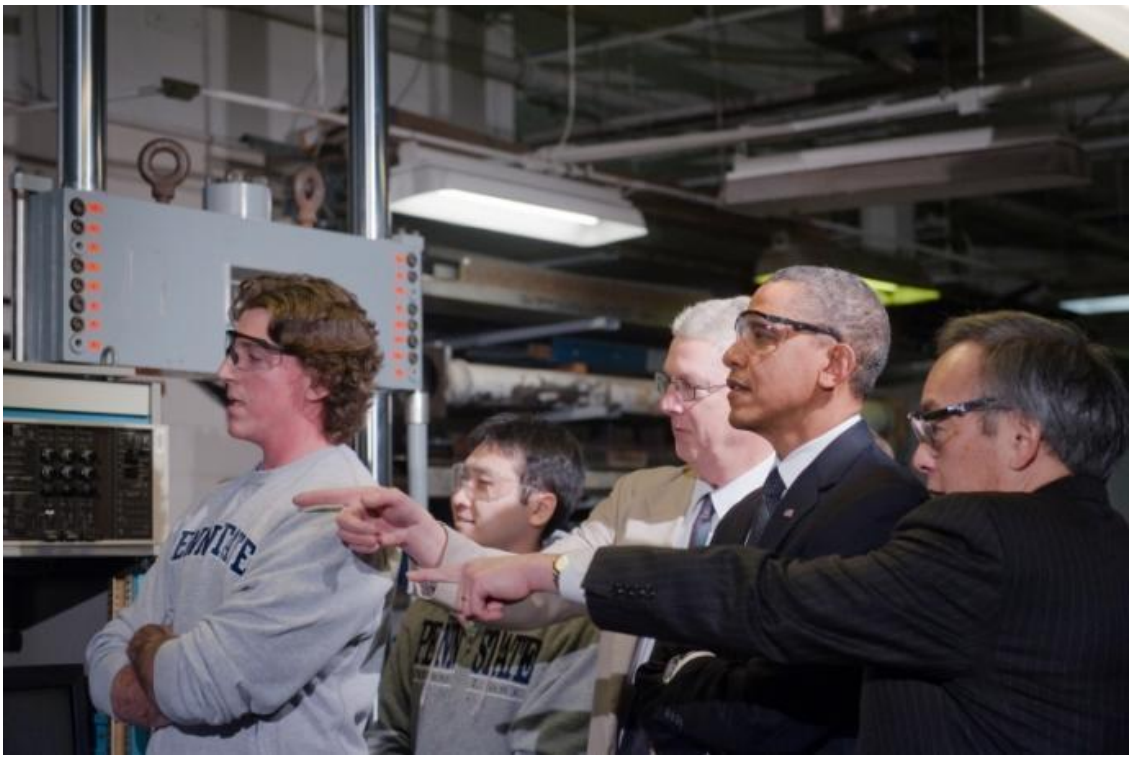
At Penn State, researchers are investigating ways to create more energy-efficient building technologies, said Dr Chimay Anumba, Professor and Department Head of Architectural Engineering.

Anumba said the ideas Obama expressed in his State of the Union address are central parts of the projects that Penn State researchers are working on.

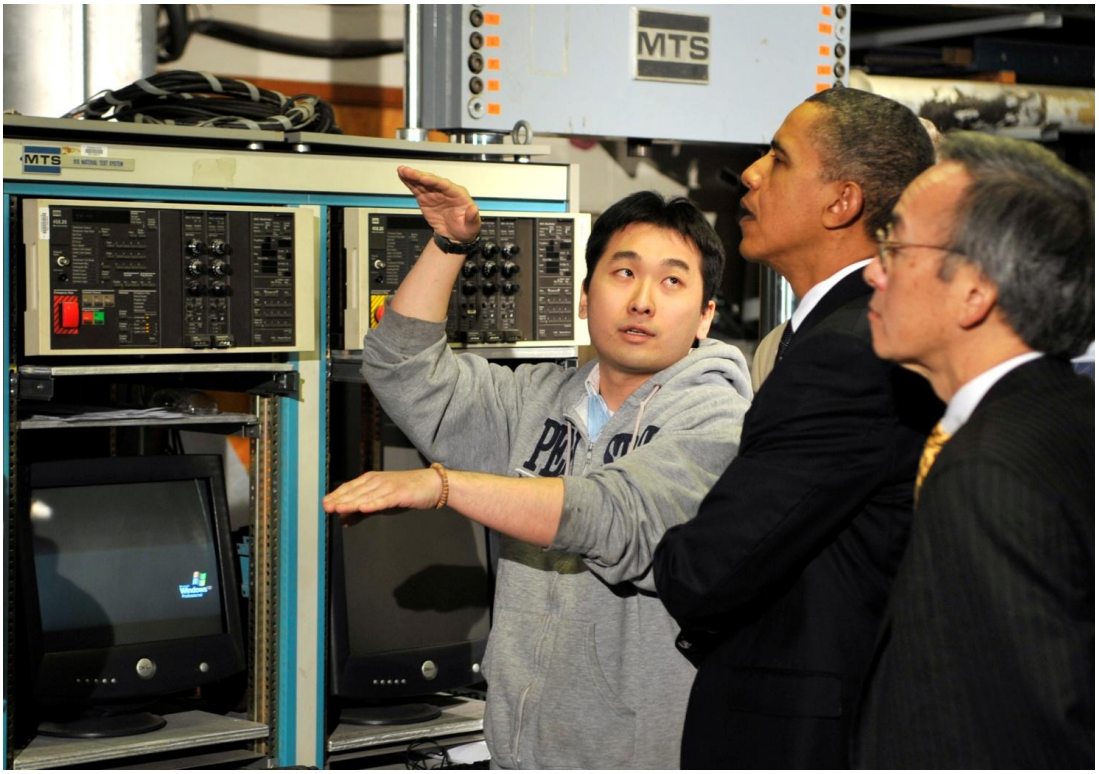
During his visit, the President and Secretary of Energy Dr. Steven Chu met with Dr. Freihaut and toured his research laboratory in the AE Department which focuses on energy-efficient building solutions and indoor air quality.

President Obama and Secretary Chu with Dr James Freihaut in his lab.
(Photo Courtesy of the Centre Daily Times/Nabil K. Mark)

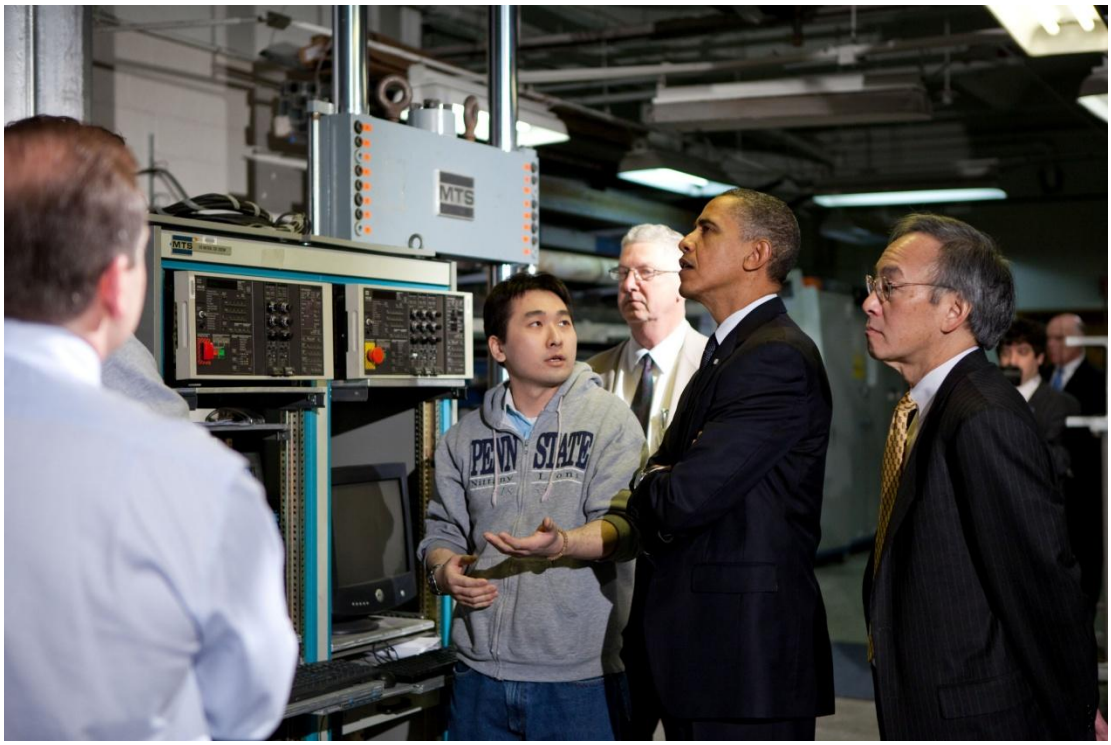
As part of President Obama's visit to Penn State, he and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, left, toured Architectural Engineering research lab facilities in the Engineering Units of the College of Engineering.
Photo Courtesy of Penn State Live

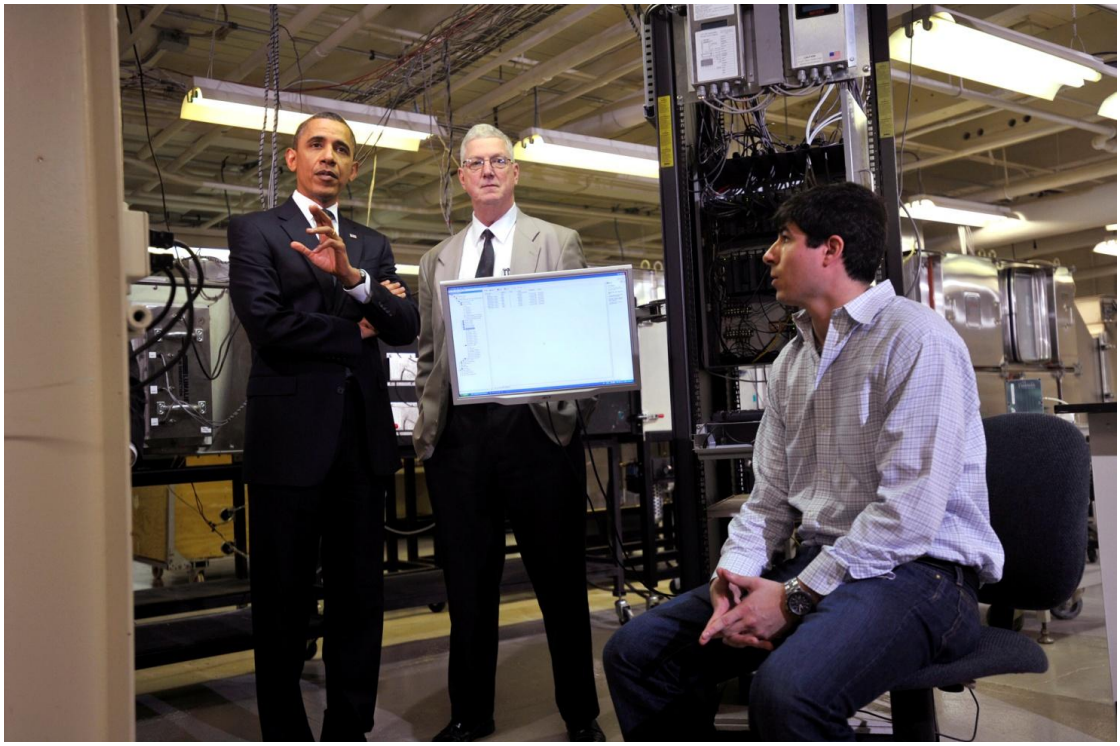


President Obama and Secretary Chu viewing presentation of an architectural glass curtain wall system under seismic racking test
Photo Courtesy of Penn State Live



President Obama and Secretary Chu with AE Graduate Student Hiroki Ota explaining how a racking facility works to simulate a seismic displacement on a curtain wall
Photo Courtesy of the Centre Daily Times/Nabil K. Mark (above)
Photo Courtesy of the White House (below)





President Obama and Dr. James Freihaut discussing indoor air quality concerns with members of the press. AE undergraduate student John Scavelli (right)

Photo Courtesy of the Centre Daily Times/Nabil K. Mark

President Obama meeting AE Research Associate, Paul Kremer
Photo Courtesy of the White House

Dr. James Freihaut demonstrating a radiometer, which shows the difference between clear glass and a glass that blocks the sun rays that causes heat.
Photo courtesy of Penn State Live (above)
Photo courtesy of the White House (below)

AE graduate student Brian Riewestahl explained how solar energy and building mechanical systems are integrated through education and research

AE undergraduate student Pat Allen (left) explaining to President Obama

Several AE students including undergraduate student Luke Gray above and AE graduate student Brian Riewestahl below had the opportunity to meet and talk with President Obama during the AE facility tour Photo courtesy of the White House

AE undergraduate Pat Allen meeting President Obama
Photo Courtesy of the White House

President Obama, Dr. James Freihaut and Secretary Chu
Photo courtesy of the White House

AE Research Associate Paul Kremer and several students were extremely helpful in preparing the laboratory and assisting with the facility tour and demonstrations for the Presidential visit.

Kremer commented, "I noticed that both the President and Secretary Chu showed great interest in the exhibits that we were able to present in the 30 minute tour that we were able to give to him before he went to Rec Hall for his speech. I was impressed that the President made a point of talking to each of the students we were allowed to have in the lab during his tour. Of course, this acknowledgement 'made their day'. The President also made it a point several times during the tour to explain to the media on hand the significance of the exhibits that we showed him with respect to his policy initiatives. From my perspective, this was a great opportunity to project the importance and interrelationship of all of the AE emphasis areas to the many problems associated with improving building energy efficiency. I only wish that we could have had more of his time to show him additional exhibits in our ICON, CANDLE and Building Controls labs that would also have showed well during his tour and driven this point home further. Nonetheless, I think that Jim was able to frame the importance and complexity of the problem with his remarks to the President."

AE graduate student Hiroki Ota said, "It was a once in a lifetime experience to have been able to meet the President of the United States and show him the kind of work we do at Penn State AE. It was a great honor and privilege to represent the department. I am thankful for the opportunity provided to me and the people whom I get to work with to make the future happen."

President Obama Speaking in Rec Hall
Photo Courtesy of Penn State Live

The President also delivered remarks at 12:30 p.m. to a large crowd of students, faculty, staff and invited guests in Rec Hall, on the importance of investing in innovation and clean energy to put people back to work, grow the economy and win the future.

He spoke on the value of supporting research initiatives that focus on energy efficiency in buildings.

Obama joked, “That may not sound too sexy until you know energy efficient buildings.” He went on to explain that our homes and businesses currently consume 40 percent of the energy used in the United States.

Obama said, “Making our buildings more energy efficient is one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest ways to save money, combat pollution, and create jobs right here in the United States of America." He said the discoveries made at Penn State will lead to more jobs in engineering, manufacturing, construction and installation.

The Department of Architectural Engineering was extremely honored to be a part of this historic visit by President Obama and Secretary Chu.

Dr. Freihaut said, “We now have the opportunity to create the tools and technologies the industry needs to truly transform the building industry and radically improve the energy efficiency of building systems.”