

SKYSONG

Arizona State University Scottsdale Innovation Center celebrates first building opening

Mika Laitinen and project manager Sanna Kirjavainen are in the midst of a U.S. business trip that will take them to San Antonio, New York, Boston, Madison, Wisc., and Seattle. The business partners are researching a U.S. headquarters for their Jyvaskyla, Finland, instrument technology development company Magnasense Ltd. Thursday, they are talking to Phoenix business, political and educational leaders at the newly launched SkySong — the Arizona State University Scottsdale Innovation Center, a global business and innovation hub.

The Finish firm is attracted to the global nature of the facility, which features partnerships with 29 companies in 11 countries, including Ireland, Turkey, Mexico, the United Kingdom, China, India, Singapore and Canada.

“We are looking for customers and we need a local appearance (in the U.S.),” said Magnasense CEO Mika Laitinen, who leaves for San Antonio tomorrow. Laitinen was among the hundreds of international business leaders, local politicians, ASU faculty, staff and donors, who attended Thursday’s grand opening for the first SkySong building, a 157,000–square–foot structure.

The entire project will house 10 ASU units, including the Edson Student Entrepreneur Initiative, ASU Tech-nopolis and the Enterprise Venture Arizona Center. In all, the development will feature 1.2 million square feet of commercial space and 800 residential units.

“It’s a true public, private partnership,” said Scottsdale Mayor Mary Manross.

ASU President Michael Crow said SkySong is “a linkage point” to a world marked by a highly entrepreneurial, market driven global economy.

“We have to, in many, ways grow up and evolve to become more of a team member ... than plowing ahead on our own,” he said.

It’s a change Yanky Fachler knows doesn’t happen overnight, but he has witnessed since moving to Dublin, Ireland, more than 10 years ago. Ireland’s economy attracted U.S. and other foreign multinationals to locate business headquarters and expand there because of the region’s pro–business tax policy.