

## **President Bush praises local water heater project**

CULLOWHEE - A federally funded effort by Western Carolina University and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to develop a new type of energy-efficient water heater has attracted the attention of President Bush.

During an energy conference March 9 in Columbus, Ohio, Bush called the project an example of the "Creative technologies" the nation must develop to decrease its dependence on foreign fuel.

WCU and A-B Tech, working with an Etowah manufacturing company, last week delivered a prototype of the water heater to Battelle, a Columbus-based technology development company toured by Bush during the conference.

"I wanted to see what innovative ideas they had about energy conservation." Bush said. "What were some of the true brains of America thinking about when it comes to encouraging energy conservation? I saw an efficient, affordable water heater that extracts heat from the air and converts it into energy that can warm your water in the shower."

In the project, funded by a \$420,000 award from the U.S. Department of Energy through Oak Ridge National Laboratory, faculty and students from WCU and A-B Tech are taking existing technology from Oak Ridge engineers and developing a new control system that combines elements of a home dehumidifier and water heater to achieve greater product reliability, flexibility of use and energy savings.

The prototype, developed by WCU, A-B Tech and American Carolina Stamping Co. in Etowah, uses the heat energy generated by a dehumidifier circuit to heat water in a standard electric water heater tank, resulting in energy savings of about 50 percent, said Aaron Ball, associate professor of engineering technology at WCU.

Funding for the project was secured through the assistance of U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor.