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Norman retreat aimed at scoping out weather strategy

Nearly 100 experts meet AT RETREAT and examine ways to keep the radar field's focus on Norman

By: James S. Tyree/The Oklahoman

NORMAN -- Norman is more than a blip on the radar of weather forecasting, and the University of Oklahoma organized the 2008 Norman Radar Retreat to keep it that way.

Nearly 100 people from OU, federal weather agencies and businesses met Monday and Tuesday at the Embassy Suites Convention Center to discuss Norman's role in recent radar advances, and to map where it likely is headed.

John Snow, dean of OU's College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, said the purpose of the retreat was to develop a five-year plan for radar research that could help form a 20-year vision for the field.

"We're attracting a lot of attention around the world," said Joe Friday, an OU meteorology professor emeritus. "We've developed radar applications for real weather forecasting, and now we're looking at tying in radar advances with monitoring birds and insects for health issues."

The National Weather Center, which houses several National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration agencies and the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, is on OU's research campus.

Suggestions from a panel discussion Tuesday included making better use of space-based weather observation, using OU to make Norman a more enticing place for radar engineers to come and stay, making radar-based information easily accessible to the public, and working with private industry in bringing federal research dollars to Norman.

Paul Risser, OU Research Cabinet chairman, said such collaborations between government, academia and business are already happening in Norman, as demonstrated again by the retreat.

"This university can be the focal point for solving weather problems," Risser said. "We have people from small companies to Lockheed Martin here together, convening on the university."



Brad Illston with Oklahoma Mesonet visit with Nick Rutledge of Oklahoma City next to a portable weather station outside the National Weather Center in Norman, Ok. during their open house Saturday, Oct. 20, 2007.
BY JACONNA AGUIRRE