

Obama rolls out high-tech initiative

Robotics, nanotechnology to help revive U.S. manufacturing, he says

PITTSBURGH — President Barack Obama called Friday for a “renaissance in American manufacturing” that would replace shuttered steel mills with plants producing robotics, nanotechnology and other high-tech advances.

The president said this resurgence is how the country will create new jobs and stay competitive in a global marketplace where other countries are making great strides.

Speaking at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, a city that has taken hits from the decline of traditional manufacturing sectors such as steel, Obama called for a joint effort by industry, universities and the federal government to help reposition the United States as a leader in cutting edge manufacturing.

“We have not run out of stuff to make, we’ve just got to reinvigorate our manufacturing sector so that it leads the world the way it always has, from paper and steel and cars to new products we haven’t even dreamed up yet,” Obama said at Carnegie Mellon’s National Robotics Engineering Center.

“That’s how we’re going to strengthen existing industries, that’s how we’re going spark new ones,” he said. “That’s how we’re going to create jobs, grow the middle class and secure our economic leadership.”

The president spoke after viewing projects at the center, including small robots that can enter sewer systems, and learning about technologies to create, among other things, next-generation diapers.

The \$500 million initiative he announced represents yet another effort by Obama to promote job-creation in the midst of an economic slowdown that has reduced hiring and weakened his job-approval standing with the public. The president has tried to elevate his profile on the economy with weekly job-related trips to states that are central to his re-election, such as Pennsylvania, a traditional campaign battleground.

On Friday, the White House announced the president’s next visit will be Tuesday to a factory in Bettendorf, Iowa.

Carnegie Mellon University is one of six universities in what the administration is calling the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership. The partnership also includes 11 manufacturing companies, including Ford Motor Co., Caterpillar Inc., Procter & Gamble Co., and Northrop Grumman Corp. Leading the effort will be Andrew Liveris, president and chief executive officer of the Dow Chemical Co., and Susan Hockfield, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“This partnership is about



With a robot as a backdrop, President Barak Obama announced Friday a \$500 million initiative to create manufacturing jobs while visiting Carnegie Mellon University’s National Robotics Engineering Center in Pittsburgh.

new cutting-edge ideas to create new jobs, spark new breakthroughs, reinvigorate American manufacturing today, right now,” Obama said.

“It’s about making sure our workers and businesses have the skills and the tools they need to compete better, faster and smarter than anybody else,” the president said. “That’s what we’re about. We’re America and we don’t just keep up with changing times, we set the pace for changing times.”

The administration’s plan includes \$70 million for a robotics initiative. It also is steering \$300 million toward national security industries and \$100 million for research and training to more quickly develop advanced materials at lower costs. Some of the \$500 million would come from existing allocations to government agencies, but other money would require

approval by Congress, where Republicans are more focused on cutting spending than approving new government initiatives.

The initiative Obama announced Friday is the brainchild of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. In a report issued Friday, the council warned that U.S. leadership in manufacturing is at risk. It said the United States has been losing research and development associated with manufacturing to other countries.

Importantly, the council noted, the United States is losing the manufacturing competition for products that were invented in the U.S., including laptop computers, flat-panel displays and lithium ion batteries.