

New Tech Center Offers Cutting-Edge Opportunities

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As classes begin at the new technology center, UNH Manchester starts on its path to becoming the go-to tech resource for both students and the business community.

Highly anticipated in the local IT community, the Emerging Technology Center (ETC) is a cutting-edge resource for businesses and academics to collaborate and experiment together on real world projects.

“The center will connect Manchester businesses with bright and eager students,” says Jeremy Hitchcock, CEO of Manchester-based Dyn. “This will help with future recruiting and retention. In addition, businesses will have a lab to test new ideas and strategies that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to do. This can lead to breakthroughs that help the company succeed.”

The ETC, located in the newly renovated Pandora Mill, will support advancement in education and technology thanks to a three-year, \$125,000 commitment from Dyn and its philanthropic entity, DynCares. The University contributed \$237,000 to the center, and UNH Manchester’s own Dean Ali Rafieymehr is also showing his support for the project.

“I personally committed myself to \$25,000 over the next five years,” Rafieymehr says. “I believe strongly that this is going to be very successful and that it’s going to be a win-win for everybody.”

The main objective of the center is to create the opportunity and the environment to work on a real project with a company. Not only are students getting practical experience in research and development, but the initiative is helping the community at large.

“Some companies have tons of projects to do but they don’t have the resources, or the time, or budget to do it,” says Rafieymehr. “It becomes a lower priority for them but they really want to do it. And now they can give it to us to do at the ETC.”

Though at first the center will specialize in computer technology projects, Rafieymehr has plans to expand the program to include project opportunities for every major at the university.

What further sets the ETC apart from other tech centers that have popped up around the state is that it will be open to students at the university, but also to community college and high school students. That’s particularly appealing to local companies like Dyn.

“We decided to headquarter Dyn in New Hampshire because it is a truly wonderful place to live,” Hitchcock says. “For a business to succeed, however, it needs talented employees.”

“We wanted to help support an endeavor that connected the many great businesses in the state with some of the brightest students. We believe the ETC does that,” says Hitchcock.

And Rafieymehr isn’t stopping there. To help the cash-strapped Manchester School District, UNH Manchester will be offering four college courses to area high school

juniors and seniors for just \$100 per class. “These are typically \$2,000 courses,” Rafieymehr says.

The courses are Introduction to C++ programming, Introduction to Web Design and Web Authoring, and Intro to Business. The fourth class will be for students preparing for the FIRST Robotics competition. The university is also working with Dean Kamen, inventor and founder of DEKA, a New Hampshire-based research and development company, to establish a scholarship for high school students who make it onto Kamen’s FIRST Dean’s List. Students who make it onto the list are eligible to apply for a STEM scholarship at UNH Manchester that will pay out \$5,000 each year for four years.

“As business continues to move online it will become even more dependent on workers with STEM skills,” Hitchcock says. “That dependency means there will be plenty of good jobs for students when they graduate. In addition, some of the most exciting breakthroughs and discoveries are happening in those fields, which should really make students want to be a part of them.”

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