

Alumni Association Throws Support Behind Manchester STEM Efforts

Thursday, June 27, 2013

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The Board of Directors of the University of New Hampshire Alumni Association recently voted to provide \$25,000 toward the construction of the STEM Discovery Lab in UNH

Manchester's new space in the Pandora building. This contribution was made in recognition of the importance of the project in furthering a joint effort among the state's institutions of higher education to double the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines by 2025.

Scheduled to open this fall, the STEM Discovery Lab at Pandora will feature hands-on lab space for students in grades five through 12, with ongoing after-school and weekend exposure to activities facilitated by alumni and community mentors as well as UNH Manchester students and faculty.

"This show of support for what we are trying to do is incredibly important," said Ali Rafieymehr, dean of UNH Manchester. "In order to be successful in our efforts to meet the state's need for more graduates we have to get young people interested and involved at a younger age. The discovery lab will give us this opportunity."

The Alumni Association vote of support was unanimous, with members noting the importance of the project but also the growing collaborative effort to address the issue.

"We wanted to join with UNH, the city of Manchester, the Manchester School District, and Merrimack Valley business and industry leaders in showing our commitment to this learning and teaching center that will inspire students to become the next generation of scientists, engineers, computing professionals, and mathematicians," said J. Michael Hickey, president of the UNH Alumni Association Board of Directors. "We all have a role to play in ensuring the future economic well-being of the state and this is an exciting step on that path forward."

The STEM Discovery Lab will join UNH Manchester's new Emerging Technology Center at the historic Pandora mill building. The ETC is a resource for businesses and academics to collaborate and experiment together on real world projects, connecting Manchester businesses with not only UNH Manchester students but community college and high school students as well. Students get practical experience in research and development and the community at large benefits too.

"With these two centers we will not only continue to grow as a resource and asset to the region's businesses, but we will have a way to keep K-16 students engaged and excited in science and math," Rafieymehr said. "It's a win for everyone."

Pat Snow, principal of Beech Street Elementary School in Manchester, agreed. "There is evidence mounting every day on how technology ignites students' interests and curiosity," she said. "This is certainly true with the 100 fifth grade students that attended UNH Manchester recently for a course in 3-D animation and computer programming."

Originally published by:
UNH Today

- WRITTEN BY:
[Staff writer](#) | Communications and Public Affairs



University of New Hampshire

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