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Carmelle Druchniak
UNH Media Relations

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NASA Upgrades Status of NH Space Grant Consortium, New Rank More Than Doubles Its Funding

By *Carmelle Druchniak*
UNH News Bureau

For additional comment, contact Consortium Director David Bartlett at 603-862-0094. For general information, visit the N.H. Space Grant Consortium Web site at <http://www.nhsgc.sr.unh.edu>

DURHAM, N.H. -- The New Hampshire Space Grant Consortium has been expanded and its budget more than doubled, thanks to a decision to upgrade the group by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The consortium, led by the University of New Hampshire in collaboration with Dartmouth College, has supported educational activities in the fields of physics, astronomy, natural sciences, earth sciences, engineering and education involving more than 200 UNH and Dartmouth undergraduate and graduate students. It also offers support to other programs, including Project SMART (Science and Mathematical Achievement through Research Training), a UNH summer institute for gifted high school science students; and Forest Watch, another UNH program that engages kindergarten through high school students and their teachers in field and satellite imagery of New England forests.

The upgraded designation will expand NASA's funding of the consortium budget to approximately \$430,000 annually. It also brings in more partners, including the state's seven-campus Community Technical College System, Plymouth State College, the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium and Manchester's FIRST Place program.

"The biggest boost from this upgrade will be engaging more institutions and students in New Hampshire in our programs and scholarships," says consortium director David Bartlett, associate director of the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space. "The upgrade is the result of a strong group effort, and we're pleased not only for UNH, but for the entire state."

U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) participated in announcing the award and comments, "The Space

Grant Consortium provides New Hampshire with an important resource to expand opportunities for students in math and science education. Building on the strengths of UNH and Dartmouth in math and science, the consortium ensures continued U.S. strength in space-related research and education."

As a result of the upgrade and resulting budget increase:

- Existing programs at UNH and Dartmouth will be brought to a higher level to strengthen current consortium programs: for example, UNH will implement a Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) project to increase the number of women obtaining degrees in those areas.
- New programs will begin, such as a major collaborative effort to create new space-related curricula for UNH and Dartmouth students training to be teachers.
- The consortium will provide scholarships for students pursuing training in technical fields at New Hampshire's community technical colleges.

Bartlett points out that the Space Grant Consortium's activities benefit a wide range of the state's residents. "Forest Watch will continue to provide opportunities for elementary, middle and high school students to use space-age technologies in their science classes," he says.

In addition, undergraduates in Plymouth State College's meteorology program will have the opportunity to work on their own summer research projects. New displays and shows will be developed at the McAuliffe Planetarium, which attracts thousands of visitors per year, and New Hampshire Cooperative Extension will be aided by the consortium in its effort to map sources of run-off and pollution to the state's rivers and coastline.

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