

Media Relations

UNH Awarded \$487K From NASA For H.S. Climate Change Curriculum

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DURHAM, N.H. --As part of a growing national effort to get teachers and students schooled in the fundamental elements of climate change, researchers from the University of New Hampshire's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) have been awarded a \$487,000 two-year grant from the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's (NASA) Global Climate Change Education Program (GCCE).

The project, one of just 17 selected by NASA from a pool of 130 applications, is entitled "Engaging Students in the Science of Climate Change: Using Earth Observing Data in the Classroom" and will develop high school curriculum based around data from NASA and other federal agencies that Earth scientists use in their own research.

Such data from NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other agencies are already online and publicly available but need to be modified by scientists and professional educators to make them accessible and useful to teachers and students.

"We'll take data resources like satellite imagery and output from climate models that we typically use and make them more classroom friendly," says the project's principal investigator Mary Martin, research assistant professor of forest ecosystem analysis and remote sensing at EOS and affiliate assistant professor with the department of natural resources and the environment.

The current NASA-funded climate change project will incorporate materials from a carbon cycle science education initiative developed over the past four years at the EOS Complex Systems Research Center by associate professor Scott Ollinger, Martin, research technician Sarah Silverberg, and others for the international Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program.

For the GLOBE Carbon Cycle project, UNH researchers worked with teachers to develop and pilot curricula intended to introduce students to important concepts in Earth system science centered on the carbon cycle, which is at the heart of climate change.

Says Silverberg, who has served as project coordinator and curriculum developer for the GLOBE project, "The current grant will carry our GLOBE work forward with climate change as the explicit focus and NASA Earth observation data as a core component of student activities."

A new GLOBE initiative, the Student Climate Research Campaign will also provide resources for students to investigate climate questions and will draw from all the materials UNH researchers have developed or will develop for both the carbon cycle program and GCCE project, respectively.

Ultimately, the goal of these projects is to provide teachers with a scientifically sound means of teaching climate change issues, give students the needed skills to think critically and conduct individualized climate change research projects, and allow students to interact directly with scientists through online discussion formats.

Notes Martin, "Because climate change is a long-term process and is subject to a myriad of misconceptions, this effort will help develop the knowledge and skills of future generations in an area that is becoming increasingly important to society."

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

 
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