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Media Relations

August 24, 2015

UNH Receives \$6M Grant from NOAA for Ongoing Ocean Mapping Work

DURHAM, N.H. The University of New Hampshire's Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping (CCOM) has received a \$6.2 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to continue the work of the Joint Hydrographic Center, a NOAA partnership and national ocean-mapping research center. A total award of \$31 million over five years was granted, but subsequent years will depend on availability of funds.

“This funding will support the ongoing research, training and development of state-of-the-art coastal and ocean mapping technologies that have made JHC a national center of excellence,” said Larry Mayer, founding director of CCOM and co-director of the JHC. “It will also allow us to turn our attention to a wide range of products that meet needs beyond safe navigation, like fisheries management, disaster mitigation and national security.”

The Joint Hydrographic Center was started in 2000 to develop tools and offer training to help NOAA and others meet the challenges posed by the rapid transition from the sparse measurements of depth offered by traditional sounding techniques to the massive amounts of data collected by the new generation of multibeam echo sounders, and to promote the development of new ocean mapping technologies.

The new funding will allow the center to continue exploring the use of autonomous underwater vehicles and autonomous surface vehicles as platforms for hydrographic and other mapping surveys, and to explore their capabilities and limitations in support of shallow water coastal mapping. Mayer noted in particular new work aimed at using data collected in the water column to more accurately identify bathymetric hazards and wrecks, identify natural and man-made gas seeps, and map the distribution and behavior of fish. Researchers will continue to lead deep-water surveys in support of U.S. extended continental shelf delineation and work to develop improved methods of mapping shoreline change, particularly in response to storms.

Other new initiatives include developing short distance-learning courses to train hydrographers and a new undergraduate degree in ocean engineering with planned concentrations in hydrography and ocean mapping.

“We’re grateful for the support of Sen. Shaheen and others to ensure the work of the Joint Hydrographic Center continues,” said Larry Mayer, founding director of CCOM and co-director of the JHC. We believe it is critical that the tools and techniques we develop find their way into practical application as soon as possible,” said Mayer. “Our visualization tools demystify the complexities of the ocean and seafloor and convey the discovery-driven excitement that has accompanied space exploration. We are committed to continuing this important work and sharing it broadly.”

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 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

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