UNH Small Business Program Helps Portsmouth Company Secure Grant

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Portsmouth-based Nearview leveraged training provided through the University of New Hampshire to secure a NOAA grant to use drone technology to map intertidal vegetation. *Photo credit: Nearview.*

DURHAM, N.H.—Portsmouth-based Nearview, a participant in the University of New Hampshire's FOSTER program to help small businesses grow by accessing federal grant funding, has received $150,000 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop an artificial intelligence model for its aerial drone environmental services.

"The staff and consultants of the FOSTER program were really instrumental in helping Nearview win this award," said Stefan Claesson '08G, principal scientist and owner of Nearview. "From review of proposal narratives to hammering out budget details, they helped us to navigate a complex application process. We are grateful for the support we received and look forward to working with the FOSTER program on future opportunities."

FOSTER—FOcused SBIR/STTR Teaching, Equity and Results—is an initiative led by UNHInnovation that seeks to increase the number of Granite State small businesses, particularly those in underserved communities, that successfully compete for research and development funding from the federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. Historically, only a handful of New Hampshire small businesses, which employ nearly half of all state workers, have received these grants.

The program offers New Hampshire businesses free services such as grant identification, training, advice and proposal support. Since its launch in 2020, FOSTER has provided training to approximately 45 N.H. companies and awarded seven Granite State businesses, including Nearview, microgrants for additional proposal development assistance.

Nearview deploys small unmanned aerial systems with advanced remote sensing capabilities and offers surveying, mapping, analysis and monitoring to organizations and individuals around the world. Nearview specializes in supporting natural resource management, alternative energy initiatives, infrastructure projects, cultural research and environmental justice campaigns.

The company's NOAA grant supports developing an artificial intelligence model that will automate detection and mapping of intertidal vegetation. The project will help stakeholders—wild seaweed harvesters, conservation groups, government agencies, municipalities, environmental scientists, coastal engineers and private property owners—make better decisions to ensure the sustainability of resources and build resilient coastal communities in the face of climate change, sea-level rise and other human impacts such as coastal development, pollution and overharvesting of resources.

"We are excited to hear of Nearview's award and expect it will be the first of many success stories," said Marc Eichenberger, FOSTER project director and interim director of UNHInnovation. Eichenberger adds that FOSTER just received a second round of funding. "This additional support means we can continue through September of 2022 to provide New Hampshire companies with training workshops and speaker series led by industry experts, add additional resources like startup bootcamps and increase direct support for companies by expanding our microgrant program."

FOSTER is available to New Hampshire technology businesses with fewer than 500 employees, with an important mandate to support underserved communities such as women- and minority-owned businesses, rural as well as socially and economically disadvantaged companies.

The University of New Hampshire inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation and world. More than 16,000 students from all 50 states and 71 countries engage with an award-winning faculty in top-ranked programs in business, engineering, law, health and human services, liberal arts and the sciences across more than 200 programs of study. As one of the nation's highest-performing research universities, UNH partners with NASA, NOAA, NSF and NIH, and receives more than $110 million in competitive external funding every year to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

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https://www.unh.edu/unhtoday/sites/default/files/media/drone_2.jpg
Portsmouth-based Nearview leveraged training provided through the University of New Hampshire to secure a NOAA grant to use drone technology to map intertidal vegetation. Photo credit: Nearview.

- **Media Contact**

Erika Mantz | Communications and Public Affairs | erika.mantz@unh.edu

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