UNH Receives $8M NSF Grant to Advance New Hampshire’s Science and Technology Leadership

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DURHAM, N.H. — New Hampshire will boost its research leadership as an innovator in science and technology and increase its STEM workforce with investments across the state’s institutions of higher education, thanks to an $8 million grant to the University of New Hampshire from the National Science Foundation. The cooperative agreement award, one of just three of its type in the nation, aims to increase research opportunities, mentoring, training and partnerships between New Hampshire’s community colleges, four-year colleges and universities and industry.

"With this support, UNH will collaborate across New Hampshire to create a more robust research infrastructure that allows all institutions in the state to more meaningfully participate in funded research projects, building New Hampshire’s STEM workforce and driving the state’s innovation economy," said Marian McCord, senior vice provost for research, economic engagement and outreach and principal investigator on the grant.

The initiative, called New Hampshire Long-term Investment to Fuel Transformative research (NH-LIFT), will provide several different opportunities—for students to pursue research experiences in areas that align with their interests; for academic and industry researchers to expand their research pursuits through external funding and accessible research infrastructure; and for the state to increase and retain a skilled workforce-ready population.

Among NH-LIFT’s initiatives are:

- Developing a statewide network of research facilities to broaden access to advanced instrumentation and technical expertise.
- Increasing student and early-career researcher success through cross-institution programming and partnerships that support research, mentoring, career development and retention.
- Improving research support and service capacity at primarily undergraduate institutions and small businesses.
“New Hampshire’s research community drives scientific progress. It creates jobs, strengthens our local economy and addresses some of our nation’s most pressing challenges,” said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, chair of the U.S. Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee and chair of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. “I have no doubt that with this award the New Hampshire Long-term Investment to Fuel Transformational Research (NH-LIFT) project, spearheaded by the University of New Hampshire, will achieve great outcomes. Through collaborations like these, New Hampshire’s colleges and universities have shown they can train and deliver America’s next STEM leaders. This award is a win for the Granite State’s scientific community. I look forward to following and celebrating its results while continuing to fight for investments, through the EPSCoR program, that benefit the state of New Hampshire.”

“The NH-LIFT project encapsulates New Hampshire’s innovative spirit by bringing together New Hampshire colleges and universities with our businesses to drive our economy forward,” said Sen. Maggie Hassan. “I worked across the aisle to help develop and pass into law the Chips and Science Act so that projects like this one would be possible, and I’m excited to see $8 million coming to our state to help strengthen cutting edge research and our STEM workforce.

Partners in the four-year NH-LIFT initiative are the Community College System of New Hampshire; UNH and Dartmouth College, the state’s two research universities; and primarily undergraduate-serving institutions Antioch University New England, Colby-Sawyer College, Franklin Pierce University, Keene State College, New England College, Plymouth State University, Rivier University and Saint Anselm College.

By engaging the full spectrum of post-secondary education in the state, NH-LIFT aims to expand opportunities to contribute to the state’s innovation-based economies to more students who are ethnically diverse, first-generation or from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

“To build sustainable research capacity, we are leveraging individual institutional strengths across the state and creating enduring networks,” said Melinda Treadwell, president of Keene State College. “At Keene State College, we look forward to building upon existing collaborative partnerships across the state to enhance opportunities for our students and faculty to engage in powerful research.”

NH-LIFT is supported by an award from the National Science Foundation EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement E-CORE program. UNH also secured and managed NSF EPSCoR’s last major investment in New Hampshire, the $20 million NH BioMade initiative, which supports the state’s rapidly growing biomaterials industry.

The University of New Hampshire (https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unh.edu%2F&data=05%7C02%7CKeith.Testa%40unh.edu%7C17cd9d88699942b5191608dc744835ff%7Cd6241893512d46dc8d2bbe47e25 inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation and world. More than 16,000 students from 49 states and 82 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. A Carnegie Classification R1 institution, UNH partners with NASA, NOAA, NSF, and NIH, and received over $210 million in competitive external funding in FY23 to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

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Caption: Undergraduate student researchers test samples in the Additive Biomanufacturing Lab at Keene State College.

Photo credit: William Wrobel / Keene State College

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