

The Tagliatela College of Engineering

UNH to House North America's Third Solar Product Testing Facility

There is a critical need for solar product testing and it is significantly constraining development of the U.S. solar industry," says Barry Farbrother, Ph.D., dean of the Tagliatela College of Engineering. All solar products must undergo testing at a facility licensed by the Solar Research and Certification Corporation (SRCC) before they can be sold to consumers, but right now there are only two approved testing labs in all of North America. That means companies with new products are obliged to wait an astounding four years before they can get their products tested.

Thanks to \$500,000 in funding from the multi-billion dollar 2010 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, signed into law by President Barack Obama last fall, the University is on the verge of becoming

North America's third solar testing facility. Not only will the funding create a lab where trained engineering students can test new solar products, reducing the backlog, it also will dramatically enhance solar technology education at UNH, exposing the engineers of tomorrow to state-of-the-art solar technology and simultaneously creating paid internships. Teams of engineering students will work with the SRCC to understand testing protocols and create instruments for the new laboratory, says Farbrother. "My goal is to make education more relevant," he says, "integrating theory and practice."

The project evolved from a partnership between

the Tagliatela College and Poulsen Hybrid, LLC, a Shelton, Conn. manufacturer of clean energy products. Both are participants in a consortium, including Gateway and Middlesex Community Colleges and area companies, that has recently evolved.

"Companies like ours need a workforce as we continue to grow," says Frank Kuchinski, marketing director at Poulsen. "That's why we got involved with UNH. We want to see Connecticut achieve its potential as a clean energy state. It's an investment in everyone's future."

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