

Media Relations

Press Release:

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FAU Enters into \$3 Million Collaborative Federal Initiatives in Naval Engineering Research and Education

BOCA RATON, FL (January 24, 2011) — Florida Atlantic University's department of ocean and mechanical engineering and SeaTech in the College of Engineering and Computer Science have kicked off three long-term collaborative initiatives which involve more than \$3 million in federal funding for research and education in naval engineering.

"FAU's ocean engineering academic programs have emerged to become top-rated programs nationally and internationally," said FAU President Mary Jane Saunders. "We are extremely pleased to have been selected to receive this funding to conduct research and education in this field, and to continue our ongoing partnerships with government, industry and academia."

The three research and education projects include:

Atlantic Center for the Innovative Design & Control of Small Ships (ACCESS): This is a five-year Office of Naval Research-sponsored international research collaboration between Stevens Institute (lead), the Naval Academy, Webb Institute, Naval Postgraduate School, FAU and University College in London and is aimed at developing innovative unmanned autonomous small surface ships. FAU will receive more than \$900,000 over the five-year-period for this project which will lead to the development of systems for autonomous cooperation between small surface ships and autonomously launched autonomous underwater vehicles.

Naval Engineering Education Center (NEEC): This is a five-year, multi-university, \$50 million U.S. Navy initiative which involves collaboration being led by the University of Michigan to support the development and maintenance of a skilled engineering workforce in the Navy laboratories. Other collaborating universities include FAU, MIT, Virginia Tech, Webb Institute, Penn State, Stevens Institute, Georgia Tech, Florida State University, Old Dominion, UT-San Antonio, University of Washington, University of New Orleans, University of Iowa and Tennessee State University (TSU). FAU will receive \$1.45 million for this project which will provide new research opportunities for FAU faculty, and career, scholarship and internship opportunities for U.S. students at FAU. This collaboration has already led to visits to FAU by the engineering dean and faculty of TSU and the development of a specific collaborative proposal between FAU and TSU, led by Hassan Mahfuz, Ph.D., professor, department of ocean and mechanical engineering at FAU, in the area of composite materials.

Characterization and Exploitation of Magnetic and Electric Fields in the Coastal Ocean Environment: This project is a collaborative research initiative between FAU's SeaTech, the Navy and Nova Southeastern University. FAU received \$705,000 for this project which is sponsored by the Office of Naval Research. This project is potentially a multi-year effort that will lead to the development of a one-of-a-kind, in-water electromagnetic test facility on the Navy range just offshore of SeaTech in Dania Beach, Fla., and will support identifying the

sources and nature of variability in background electromagnetic noise in coastal waters that affect detection and recognition of weak electromagnetic signals from man-made sources.

“These federally funded collaborations provide important opportunities for cross-fertilization of new ideas in engineering education and research amongst the participating institutions and will have a positive impact on the quality of our programs,” said Manhar Dhanak, Ph.D., principal investigator for the three projects, and professor and director of SeaTech. “These projects will build upon our considerable research activities in naval engineering, and will engage students in innovation through hands-on internships and provide them with new scholarship and career opportunities.”

Ocean engineering research and education programs at FAU in the areas of underwater acoustics, marine materials, hydrodynamics and physical oceanography and autonomous underwater vehicles have received significant funding over the years from the Office of Naval Research. Funding of these programs has led to a number of research publications and development of innovative ocean technologies. FAU’s SeaTech is a state-funded institute for ocean and systems engineering, and is dedicated to the promotion of ocean engineering research, and development and transition of ocean technologies through its ocean-side laboratories.

“We are extremely proud of the many contributions our faculty and students have made in the field of ocean engineering, research and education,” said Mohammad Ilyas, Ph.D., interim chair and professor, FAU’s department of ocean and mechanical engineering. “The significant funding we will receive to launch these three new projects is a testament to their accomplishments.”