



**December 23, 2011**

NR11135

# News Release

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## **NMCC plays key role in regional, state and national energy dialogue in 2011**

**Aroostook County** - As the country's most northeasterly community college, geography and climate ideally position NMCC to engage in the national dialogue on energy. More importantly, innovation and leadership on the part of faculty, students and administrators placed the College at the forefront of efforts to spur an emerging industry cluster centered on alternative energy and conservation in 2011.

For starters, the College attracted financial support for such initiatives to the tune of more than \$1.7 million, including its largest-ever private donation. The \$1.2 million gift from California resident and Presque Isle native Mary Smith in memory of her late husband Rodney Smith, along with funding through Efficiency Maine and MaineHousing, as well as directed campus resources, have propelled NMCC forward.

"Our efforts to introduce new curriculum and to bring together a key group of stakeholders around the areas of alternative energy and conservation have garnered significant support and have advanced considerably," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "The collaborate effort we have led serves as a direct investment in the future of our region."

Nowhere is that investment more evident than in the newly opened Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education. The facility, located a short distance from the NMCC campus in the Skyway Industrial Park, features both classroom and laboratory space for students in several programs at the College. Newly purchased equipment in the center provides for experiential learning opportunities in various alternative energy resources including wind, solar and biomass.

In addition to providing a learning laboratory for students, the center is key to regional efforts to spur an emerging renewable energy economy in northern Maine. A facility like the one created by the College was cited in a Mobilize Maine initiative report as necessary to ensuring a qualified workforce is readily available to support efforts to launch Aroostook County's new economic driver – renewable energy. The effort, led by the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, has been advanced significantly as a result of NMCC's efforts.

Since the Center's official grand opening in April it has been abuzz with activity. Over the summer the facility became home to northern Maine's Weatherization Training Center – one of only four in Maine. A pressure house, installed through a \$220,000 MaineHousing grant, now provides training to support weatherization auditing and technicians.

NMCC's alternative energy center and classrooms, as well as the labs that house the building construction and wind power technology programs on campus, were also transformed as a result of a \$225,000 grant from the Efficiency Maine Trust, resulting in new technology and curricula with greater emphasis on green energy, building methods, energy audits and weatherization.

The new alternative energy equipment covers a wide gamut. Included are learning stations equipped with solar panels, residential biomass boilers, and numerous trainers for students to learn the science behind energy production. Among the most visible new teaching tools utilized by students is a ten kilowatt residential wind turbine installed at the alternative energy center. The \$55,000, 80 foot tall unit was purchased with Smith funds through a local vendor.

The significant efforts by NMCC in the areas of alternative energy, conservation and weatherization have gained impressive regional, state, national and even international attention. The College was selected as one of only 22 nation-wide and the only school in the northeast to host a "Focus the Nation" clean energy forum held on the campus in early March. Officials from the Portland, Oregon-based non-profit organization that selected NMCC hailed the event, which attracted more than 100 participants, as one of the most successful in the country. Information shared at the day-long student-led session, including identified roadblocks and solutions to moving the renewable energy industry forward in Maine and nationally, were in turn shared with the White House.

Students and instructors in NMCC's wind power technology program also took their message to Augusta on more than one occasion. The work initiated at Maine's northernmost community college was prominently featured on Maine Wind Day at the state capitol in March. Later that same month, two NMCC's students were asked to testify before a legislative committee on the impact of the wind industry in the state. Those two students, Benjamin Dutil and Matthew Melcher, were among the first 14 in New England to earn associate degrees in wind power technology within the region.

In May, NMCC awarded the credential to its inaugural graduating class of wind technicians. The graduates were prepared to work on wind turbines both on and off-shore, in part as the result of special training offered through a partnership agreement between NMCC and Maine Maritime Academy. Alumni of the program are now working in the industry here in Maine and in other parts of the country.

The efforts to train wind technicians at NMCC caught the attention of the industry internationally. In late May, three German wind companies donated \$28,000 worth of tools and equipment to wind power technology instructor Wayne Kilcollins at the American Wind Energy Association WINDPOWER Conference and Exhibition in Anaheim, California.

In August, NMCC's efforts in alternative energy and conservation garnered national attention when a representative from the SEED (Sustainability, Education and Economic Development) Center of the American Association of Community Colleges visited campus to see and hear firsthand about efforts to develop curriculum in the area of alternative energy. The information appeared in a profile/case study that was featured nationally through SEED and highlights NMCC efforts along with the top two-year schools in the nation focused on developing curriculum in the area of alternative energy.

One of the key areas featured in the NMCC success story is the collaborative effort by the College and regional economic development organizations and private industry to expand the alternative energy opportunities in northern Maine. Crowley was also invited to share NMCC's success story in a national webinar hosted by the SEED Center.

Innovation will be the theme moving forward, as NMCC continues to invest in curriculum expansion in the areas of alternative energy and conservation. Focus in the coming year will center on how the College can support new and emerging business ventures in the region that advance the industry cluster.

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*Northern Maine Community College wind power technology instructor Wayne Kilcollins (left) works with student Simon Tutlis of Greene in the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education.*