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NMCC and Larkin Enterprises sign partnership agreement that will provide hands-on opportunities for students in New England's first wind power technology program

Aroostook County - Students enrolled in New England's only wind power technology program at Northern Maine Community College will have hands-on opportunities to practice their skills as a result of a partnership signed on the Presque Isle campus by College officials and representatives of a leading construction and engineering company in the energy industry.

Under the agreement, Larkin Enterprises, Inc., an international corporation that offers field engineering, maintenance, commissioning, and supervision in the energy industry, will provide paid internship opportunities for NMCC students at wind power projects in Maine.

"It is partnerships such as these with private industry, and the support of the business community that help define the margin of excellence we are able to provide students both in and beyond the classroom," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "Larkin Enterprises is an important player in the development of the burgeoning wind power industry in our state. They are at the forefront of projects that have recently come on-line and others that will in the months ahead. Similarly, NMCC is uniquely positioned to provide the future workforce for this emerging industry. This partnership will benefit all involved, but most especially our students."

As a result of the agreement, students enrolled in the NMCC associate degree wind power technology program will have the opportunity to apply for internships with Larkin Enterprises, Inc. Students successfully completing the program will be encouraged to apply for open positions with the company following the completion of their degree program.

“The wind power technology program at NMCC is a necessary, and yet a very unique program. This program concept allows hands on industry participation for qualified candidates attending NMCC. We at Larkin Enterprises are proud and excited to be a part of the wind power technology internship agreement,” said Richard Larkin, co-founder of Larkin Enterprises.

As a pilot for launching a formal agreement with the College, Larkin Enterprises hired three interns over the past summer that completed an introductory wind power technology course offered by NMCC earlier this spring. The success of the summer program paved the way for future collaboration between the two organizations.

“Working at the Kibby Mountain project gave NMCC students real world experience with daily activities during construction of a wind park. This experience allowed them to see the practical aspects of what they learn in the classroom and lab. Many students ask: ‘Well this is great, but where would I use this information?’ When the students have a chance to see the rigging required to lift a six ton blade or the power cables run down a 300 foot tower from a three megawatt generator, they get an appreciation for what they are learning in the classroom,” said Wayne Kilcollins, NMCC wind power technology instructor. “Richard Larkin’s willingness to work with NMCC to give our students this internship experience will be a great asset to the Wind Power Technology program.”

NMCC students Parker Brown of Mapleton, Brian Kingsbury of Houlton and David Lown of Fort Fairfield interned for Larkin in western Maine on the Trans Canada-Kibby Mountain Wind Project over the summer months to support the effort to install 44 three megawatt wind turbines on the Kibby Mountain range. The three worked hands-on completing various tasks including tower cable pulling, tower lighting and even developing strategies to improve project workflow.

“Mr. Brown, Mr. Kingsbury, and Mr. Lown have shown exceptional work ethic throughout their internship with Larkin Enterprises, Inc. at the Kibby Mountain wind project. NMCC’s wind power technology program and its partnership agreement with LEI, as shown with the large enrollment numbers for the program, will supply the State of Maine wind industry with highly-qualified individuals with on the job experience,” said Milton McBreairty, director of renewable energies of Larkin Enterprises. “A major concern in the state is that our students go to school in Maine and then leave and never come back. This program and partnership will create a work force that will compliment the State of Maine’s ambition in bringing green jobs to the state and keeping them here.”

The NMCC wind power technology program is a newly developed associate degree program, which, this fall, welcomed its inaugural entering class of 40 students. Interest in the program, which was approved by the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees a year ago, was so high that college officials increased capacity to accommodate a qualified applicant pool of more than 50 students. The program offers broad fundamental aspects of the wind power industry, with a focus on wind turbine maintenance and electrical power production.

Larkin Enterprises, Inc. was founded in 1994 by Richard and Nancy Larkin in the basement of their Hampden, Maine home. Together, the couple has built LEI to be the premier provider of technical expertise for all phases of construction and engineering in the energy industry, including renewable energy projects. In October 2002, LEI was listed in INC Magazine as one of the fastest growing private companies in the United States. The company's client base reaches across the globe including China, Taiwan, India, Qatar, Canada and Europe.

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Representatives from Northern Maine Community College and Larkin Enterprises signed an agreement on September 17 on the Presque Isle campus that will provide paid internship opportunities for students in NMCC's wind power technology students at wind power projects in Maine. Taking part in the ceremonial signing of the agreement were, from left: Alan Punches, NMCC vice president/academic dean; Timothy Crowley, NMCC President; Milton McBreairty, director of renewable energies for Larkin Enterprises; and Mike Ireland, business development manager for Larkin Enterprises.