



News Release

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NMCC's Kilcollins participation in Governor's renewable energy mission to Europe to benefit New England's first Wind Power Technology program

Aroostook County - A world of opportunity may open up for students in New England's first wind power technology program at Northern Maine Community College as a result of faculty member Wayne Kilcollins participation in Governor Baldacci's Maine renewable energy mission to Spain and Germany late last month.

Internship and job placement prospects for NMCC wind power technology students and future graduates, program benchmarking and discussions on possible collaborative research studies with a German university are all part of what Kilcollins brought back to the Presque Isle college from the week-long mission.

"The mission provided me an opportunity to discuss our program with several wind turbine manufacturers and regional colleges. I also had the chance to discuss our program with the Spanish Wind Energy Association and the Spanish Renewable Energy Association. Each group had a considerable amount of interest in our program," said Kilcollins.

Coordinated by the Maine International Trade Center, the exchange focused on the renewable power industries in Madrid and Zaragoza, Spain and Bremen and Bremerhaven, Germany. Kilcollins and other members of the delegation joined Baldacci and participated in meetings with key energy industry contacts, investors, educators and manufacturers.

Among the contacts made by the NMCC wind power technology instructor were human resource personnel with four European alternative energy companies. Two of the corporations, Iberdrola and Gamesa, have operations in Pennsylvania and, according to Kilcollins, are very interested in speaking with NMCC students upon graduation from the program.

"They are looking for technicians to staff their operations and maintenance positions for projects under development in the northeast. Gamesa presently has a project under development in southern New Hampshire. Two other companies, Acciona and ADES have interest in locating operations in the United States and would be interested in technicians when they set up operations. We will also be pursuing internship relationships with these organizations going forward," said Kilcollins.

Aside from productive meetings with industry representatives, Kilcollins visited with officials from colleges and universities in the two European countries to discuss their role in training wind technicians. The conversations spawned a great deal of interest in the NMCC program according to the instructor. Specifically, the European colleges and training organizations were interested in the way NMCC presented the wind power technology program curriculum.

“Several of the existing wind technician training programs set up in Germany are retraining mechanical and electrical technicians through an intensive six month program. They were interested in learning whether we were going to pursue this type of program,” said Kilcollins. “Our goal is to develop our workforce with the associate degree program to ensure the NMCC wind power technology students have a broad knowledge base to enter the wind industry and be able to excel in other related job opportunities over their career and not be limited to an entry-level position.”

In another of his discussions with a university contact in Germany, Kilcollins was asked if he would consider collaborating on a study on wind turbulence and turbine ice issues. The German education institution is conducting the research for industry use, but is currently limited to data from their geographic area.

“They were interested in gathering and interpreting data from our region so they would be able to assist turbine manufacturers in designing improvements to mitigate problems created by these conditions,” said Kilcollins.

Reflecting on the renewable energy mission, Kilcollins is quick to note that an added benefit of his participation was the opportunity to discuss the NMCC program at length with many members of the impressive Maine delegation. Included in the group were leaders representing several organizations in, and connected to, wind power development in Maine; among them Larkin Enterprises, Reed and Reed, Cianbro, Sullivan and Merritt, General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works and the Maine Public Utilities Commission. According to Kilcollins many of the companies in Maine are very interested in moving forward with future collaboration with NMCC, including possible internship and employment opportunities for students.

“The renewable energy mission was very productive in networking with other organizations in the wind industry. These new contacts will be valuable in assessing where the wind industry is moving over the years and will provide contact to ensure our technical programs meet their needs,” said Kilcollins. “There will be considerable development in alternative energy, especially in wind energy, over the years to come. Our position is to ensure the students are prepared and positioned to enter the workforce and have the necessary skills to succeed.”

On the heels of the renewable energy mission, Kilcollins and his faculty colleague Todd Maynard, NMCC electrical construction and maintenance instructor, traveled to Augusta to participate in the first Maine Wind Energy Conference on October 6.

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Northern Maine Community College wind power technology instructor Wayne Kilcollins (left) in Zaragoza, Spain. Kilcollins, who participated in Governor Baldacci's recent Maine renewable energy mission to Spain and Germany is seen here on a man lift demonstrated by a crane company at Spain's 2009 Wind Expo. Kilcollins said the lift is capable of extending 295 feet into the air and is used to repair and clean wind turbine blades and towers.

Photo courtesy: Matt Wickenheiser, Portland Press Herald