

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer applauded the University System of Maryland for committing nearly \$450,000 in base funding support of a partnership between the A. James Clark School of Engineering, the College of Southern Maryland, the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center (SMHEC) and the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) in support of a program that allows students in Southern Maryland to receive an accredited University of Maryland mechanical engineering degree.

“In order to boost our economic competitiveness and help put more Marylanders back to work, we must continue building a highly-skilled workforce,” **stated Congressman Steny H. Hoyer**. “I’m pleased the University System of Maryland has announced it will provide permanent funds to support staffing for the Clark School of Engineering’s mechanical engineering program in Southern Maryland, and I applaud their commitment to supporting the strong partnership between the U.S. Navy at Pax River, University of Maryland, College of Southern Maryland, and the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center. This important investment will ensure that our students have the STEM education needed for many of the available jobs within the local defense community, and help meet the hiring needs of Pax River and local businesses.”

“The University System of Maryland is pleased to support this critical venture in Southern Maryland,” **said William Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland**. “By bringing world-class programs from the University of Maryland’s Clark School of Engineering to the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, we are helping the region grow a powerful high-tech economy.”

“This funding enables us to meet the needs of students from the tri-county area who want to obtain an accredited University of Maryland mechanical engineering degree while pursuing employment in the region at either Patuxent River Naval Air Station or at one of its supporting contractor companies,” **said Clark School Dean Darryll J. Pines**.

“We are extremely pleased with the University System of Maryland’s commitment to this critical program for Southern Maryland and for NAWCAD/NAVAIR,” **said Gary Kessler, executive director, NAWCAD**. “This program is the foundation of our strategy to grow our future workforce in Southern Maryland.

We look forward to building on this foundation in other areas with USM to meet our current and future workforce skill sets to support our warfighters.”

“Over the past several years, many people from College Park and Pax River have worked very hard to create an accredited B.S. offering in mechanical engineering at Pax River,” **said Bala Balachandran, chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the Clark School**. “With this support provided by the University System of Maryland, we will be able to expand opportunities for more students to study mechanical engineering at Southern Maryland and address the technical workforce needs of NAWCAD and the area.”

The funds will support the hiring of faculty and staff at the Clark School to meet the enrollment goals and objectives of the partnership. Approximately 65 students who live in Southern Maryland are expected to enroll on annual basis. The program is a unique collaboration that allows students who enroll to take classes at the SMHEC and have the opportunity to pursue internships at NAWCAD. In addition, technical subject matter experts on the base work with students on capstone design projects, exposing them to the type of problems they will tackle after graduation.

The collaboration, encompassing both research and educational components, launched in 2009. The educational component of the program will enable qualified College of Southern Maryland students to take University of Maryland engineering classes in three ways: by attending classes televised by the university's Clark School and presented at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, by attending classes offered by Clark School adjunct faculty at the center and by attending Clark School classes in College Park on the campus of the University of Maryland.