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Focus

on Education

GE invests \$11 million in UConn diversity and e-initiatives

The University of Connecticut has received \$11 million in pledges from General Electric Co. entities, including the GE Fund, GE Capital and GE Industrial Systems.

UConn said the funding, available over the next five years, "will help catalyze the university's emergence as an educational leader" in electronic business and e-engineering and bolster diversity initiatives.

The funds represent the largest single corporate investment in UConn and will support the schools of Engineering and Business, and the Neag School of Education.

"GE's support will be a vital asset in preparing our students for a diverse, technology-intensive 21st century workforce, enabling our faculty to conduct cutting edge research with GE and supporting Connecticut's knowledge-based economy," UConn president Philip E. Austin said in a prepared statement.

GE investments will fund:

- Construction and equipping of 18,000 square feet at the Stamford Campus, including creation of a 10,000-square-foot state-of-the-art GE Capital e-lab in which students and faculty will work with GE Capital executives to analyze e-projects and explore new e-Commerce models;

- Development of an "e-engineering" center, including cutting-edge joint research projects with GE Industrial Systems, to prepare students for the integrated, global team-based engineering used in industry today;

- New "e-learning" approaches to incorporate information technology into effective teaching and learning practices;

- Programs to support increased enrollment and success of under-represented minority engineering and business students.

The commitment by GE, both in dollars and in resources, represents a major advance in education and business partnerships, the university said.

Five GE senior executives have co-located at the new e-lab site in Stamford, working with students and faculty on e-business projects. Using the facility's advanced technology, students will tackle complex e-business issues

and will have the opportunity to report out to GE management on results and solutions.

Specific commitments include:

- GE Capital, based in Stamford, will invest nearly \$2.5 million in 2000 to establish the GE Capital e-Lab at UConn's Stamford campus.

The initial investment will create offices, classrooms, and a 10,000-square-foot emerging technologies demonstration lab as well as a high-tech "dark room" for e-project research and development.

It is anticipated that \$1 million per year will be invested over the next five years to support the continuation of the program.

Student and faculty teams under the leadership of a GE Capital-UConn steering committee will explore, analyze and make recommendations on real GE Capital e-Business projects and will explore new e-Commerce models.

- GE Fund, the philanthropic foundation of the General Electric Co., will provide a grant of \$1.5 million over five years, to be split equally between the schools of business and engineering.

The money will be used to develop and launch innovative ways of working and learning across distances; pilot new technology-based curricula, in collaboration with the Neag School of Education; train faculty; and strengthen outreach, scholarship and support activities to increase enrollment and success of under-represented minority students.

In addition, the GE Fund's alumni matching gift program will match, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, the gifts of GE employees and retirees whom are UConn alums. These gifts are expected to provide an additional \$1.5 million over the five-year period.

- GE Industrial Systems, based in Plainville, will provide \$1.5 million to the School of Engineering over three years for joint research in materials, circuit breaker technology, and energy management projects in which faculty and practicing engineers will work side by side, sharing their ideas and discoveries.