Entering a whole new dimension

Unveiling of 3D printing facility a 'pioneering moment'

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NEW PALTZ » The Hudson Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center at SUNY New Paltz on Tuesday showed off more than two dozen 3D printers that the center hopes will spark the innovative senses of students and help businesses develop new products.

The 3D printers, which cost about $2,200 each, were hailed as a technological breakthrough that can make everything from intricate medical devices to plastic copies of car keys for about a dollar.

"This is a pioneering moment," said Bre Pettis, chief executive officer with printer manufacturer MarkerBot. "We're at the frontier right at this second, and the rest of the world is watching."
This is really one of those moments where everything changes and we’re really going to unlock so much innovation.”

The printers work by taking computer designs and building items by adding layers of plastic. Pettis said the printers should attract the same attention from the same types of students who have found ways to make technology fit the interest of their generation.

“When I went to college, they just put in a computer lab,” he said. “The students who started hanging out in their spare time in the computer lab went on to have just amazing careers. … I have high expectations for the ones who come in here and go out.”

SUNY New Paltz officials say the real power of the printers, which are 2 feet wide and 2 feet tall, will be known once students take courses related to the technology.

“...That seems to be the most advanced,” said college interim Dean Paul Kassel. “But in terms of the artists in my school, it’s a fantastic toy. And who knows where you can go with it? It takes an artist’s imagination and allows almost unlimited possibilities.”

These items were made with a 3D printer.

The Hud val Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center was developed with $750,000 from investment firm Hudson River Ventures and its owner, Sean Eldridge, and $250,000 from Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp.

An additional $1 million will come from state grants that were announced late last year.

Eldridge, a Shokan resident and the husband of Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes, has announced his intention to challenge U.S. Rep. Chris Gibson, R-Kinderhook, in the November election.

SUNY New Paltz President Donald Christian said the 3D printers will help the college attract students who are interested in both creative arts and business careers.

“We expect this environment to enhance our students’ preparation for high-tech careers that bring creativity and advanced manufacturing expertise, and to seek collaborations among academics, students and regional industry that will further enhance our mission as the region’s public university and an economic driver in the Hudson Valley,” Christian said.