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## SUNY New Paltz breaks ground on \$14 million engineering building

**Nina Schutzman**, Poughkeepsie Journal Published 3:53 p.m. ET Oct. 31, 2017



(Photo: Courtesy of Urbahn Architects)

In two years, a \$14 million academic building that will enhance SUNY New Paltz's engineering programs will stand on what was a parking lot.

The Engineering Innovation Hub, which is expected to be finished by summer 2019, will address a critical shortage in engineers needed to serve advanced manufacturing interests in the Hudson Valley, according to SUNY New Paltz.

College officials hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the start of construction for the new building on Tuesday afternoon. In attendance were elected and education officials, including new SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson, along with architects for the project.

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The 19,500 square foot, two-story hub will "help support and diversify the college's engineering programs, including the fairly new bachelor's degree program in mechanical engineering, and will include innovative teaching and research lab spaces," said SUNY New Paltz President Donald Christian.

"This investment is projected to yield a regional economic impact of more than \$75 million, about 195 (full time) jobs over a 10-year-period," Christian added. "The hub will be the college's second new academic building in just about 20 years, and will meet economic and educational needs in our region."

In addition to the mechanical engineering bachelor's degree program, the hub will house the Hudson Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center — the college's 3D design and printing program — and will have space to support businesses participating in START-UP NY, the governor's economic development incentive program.

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Urbahn Architects designed the hub to allow for a potential expansion if the program's growth requires more space in the future, according to a news release from the firm.

"The Engineering Innovation Hub is a perfect example of investments in academia that help foster business and industry partnerships, create new jobs, and ensure the next generation of leaders continue moving New York forward," said Gov. Andrew Cuomo in a news release. "This expansion continues our focus on growing high-tech industries in the mid-Hudson Valley, while providing quality jobs for men and women throughout the region."

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The Hub will be funded in part through a \$10 million NYSUNY2020 grant. The grants, according to the [SUNY website \(https://www.suny.edu/impact/business/nysuny-2020/\)](https://www.suny.edu/impact/business/nysuny-2020/), are given to projects that "leverage private sector resources to fulfill long term economic and academic plans." Another \$1 million will come from the governor's Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council's annual consolidated funding application.

"This is really a strategy to ... connect the dots between the academic programs and the economic regional generators," said Johnson, an engineer who became chancellor of the State University of New York system in September.

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SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson, fourth from left, pictured during a ceremonial groundbreaking at SUNY New Paltz. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)

Tuesday marked Johnson's first trip to the SUNY New Paltz campus.

"An innovation hub is a place that inspires and fosters open interactions, along with connections to local industry," Johnson said. Today, the hub is a "kernel of an idea," but it will be the site of "great success" in the future.

The college began offering mechanical engineering as a major in fall 2014, Daniel Freedman, dean of the School of Science and Engineering at New Paltz, said. About 150 students are enrolled.

"We heard several years ago from manufacturers in the region ... that they were challenged sometimes in recruiting mechanical engineers to the Hudson Valley," said Christian. "So the idea of creating a mechanical engineering program right here was one that had widespread regional support."

Garrett Noach is a mechanical engineering major who interns at the college manufacturing center.

"There is a high demand for mechanical engineers in the Hudson Valley," said Noach, a Putnam County resident. The hub will provide the experience students need to prepare for the job market, "in the form of equipment and technical expertise. The innovation hub...will be remarkable for current and future generations of engineering students here."

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