

## **Natick, UMass Lowell to work together for Soldiers**

U.S. Army

LOWELL, Mass. (Feb. 7, 2013) -- Scientists and engineers from Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center will join faculty and student researchers from the University of Massachusetts Lowell in a new research and development initiative that was announced Feb. 7 at the UMass Lowell campus.

Known as "HEROES" -- Harnessing Emerging Research Opportunities to Empower Soldiers -- the effort will feature collaborative research projects aimed at Soldier survivability, sustainability, mobility, combat effectiveness, and quality of life in the field. More protective outerwear, body armor and equipment are expected to be among the areas of focus.

"We will bring together some of the best minds from both organizations to brainstorm new solutions to challenges that our men and women in uniform face," said UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan. "We're going to be able to, in this collaboration, help our troops and clearly save lives."

Meehan pointed out that up to 10 visiting scientists and researchers from Natick will spend two or three days per week at UMass Lowell. He added that he expects developments from the combined teams will also bear fruit later in commercial markets.

"I think all of us know that R&D (research and development) in defense is in many ways some of the best R&D that we have in this country," Meehan said. "There are all kinds of possibilities here."

NSRDEC and UMass Lowell will share facilities in the venture. In Lowell, NSRDEC scientists and researchers will occupy 5,000 square feet of work space at Olney Hall that includes laboratories, offices, conference rooms and a "think tank" area. Meanwhile, such unique Natick facilities as the Doriot Climatic Chambers will be made available to UMass Lowell faculty and student researchers.

"We see it as a two-way street," said Jack Obusek, Ph.D., Natick Soldier Systems Center senior manager and NSRDEC director. "The research is wonderful. We're going to create new technology, we're going to transition it, but we're really, at Natick, about those sons and daughters and protecting them."

"As a former Soldier and also the father of a Soldier, I have a very personal interest in this as well as a professional interest, and so I see an urgency here," he said.

This is the first project under a new agreement between the University of Massachusetts System and NSRDEC to facilitate research and development

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initiatives.

"You can do so much more together than you can all by yourself," said UMass President Robert Caret. "The outcome is really economic vitality and quality of life, both for our military personnel and for the man and woman in the street in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

HEROES is of particular interest to Lt. Gov. Tim Murray, head of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force, who has visited Natick several times.

"You understand instantaneously how the work that they are doing can protect and save lives," Murray said. "And these people take this work very seriously, because they understand."

The HEROES initiative was led by NSRDEC Chief Scientist Lynne Samuelson, who earned her Ph.D. at UMass Lowell and is an adjunct faculty member; Julie Chen, UMass Lowell vice provost for research; and UMass Lowell Plastics Engineering Prof. Ramaswamy Nagarajan.

U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, of Massachusetts, called the effort a "common-sense collaboration between two strong entities, and I really look forward to what comes of it. (Natick is) the only installation of its kind in our system in our nation, which treats the Soldier as a system. The indispensable role that Natick plays in supporting our service personnel is on display in Afghanistan, as it was in Iraq. It's so instrumental in preparing Soldiers for almost any environment they encounter."

No one could agree more than 1st Sgt. Brian Gemmill of NSRDEC, who has served combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He pointed out that Natick's work will never truly be done.

"There's no such thing as a problem solved with anything we do at NSRDEC, because there's always two variables," Gemmill said. "One variable is the enemy gets a vote. They're going to change the battlefield, and we've got to adapt to that."

Technological advances, such as those that result from HEROES, provide the second variable.

"Science has increased," said Gemmill, "so now we have new assets, new technologies that can improve upon what we already have."

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