

5-7-2012

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Recommended Citation

"Engineering a Farm System" (2012). *News Releases*. 664.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/664

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Engineering a Farm System

05.07.2012 | Students, Engineering, Science, Hot Topics

The University of Dayton and Sinclair Community College are teaming up to encourage teenagers to pursue careers in nanotechnology.

The National Science Foundation has given the two schools a \$200,000 grant for the next two years to raise awareness among undergraduates and high school students about career opportunities in the nanoscience industry.

Andrew Sarangan, associate director of the University of Dayton electro-optics graduate program, and Surinder Jain, coordinator of Sinclair's Engineering University Transfer program, will develop a program to connect high schools with industry partners, offer learning activities that include interactive laboratory and clean room experiences, provide workshops for high school science teachers and create nanotechnology internship opportunities.

"This is an important step for our local and national economy," Sarangan said. "After decades of outsourcing, more and more nanotech manufacturing companies are starting to move back to the U.S. This presents opportunities as well as challenges. Long-term success of any industry needs everyone to be on board — science educators, researchers, engineers and technicians. That is the goal we are trying to reach, by partnering with every level in the workforce pipeline."

Sarangan and Jain are well suited to lead the program. Sarangan has been part of the University's electro-optics program, which has attracted nearly \$2.58 million in research and three new companies to the area in the past year. As chair of Sinclair's Engineering University Transfer program, which prepares students to transfer to programs at four-year colleges, Jain already has developed connections with area schools to foster a better understanding of engineering education opportunities.

"It is an excellent opportunity to introduce high school students to this contemporary technology," Jain said. "Sinclair will develop two college-level courses and modules for high schools in partnership with University of Dayton and the Dayton Regional STEM Center."

Sarangan and Jain ultimately hope to establish a framework so other organizations can develop programs that establish pathways from high school to jobs in nanotechnology.

A weeklong summer workshop for science teachers will be offered June 25-29 on the University of Dayton campus. The goal is to give teachers lessons to integrate into their classrooms. Eligible participants will also receive one graduate credit from the University of Dayton. For more information, contact Sarangan at 937-229-3190 or Jain at 937-430-1780.

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.