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UNH-IOL Tech Lab Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Student-Staffed Lab Celebrates 20 Years Of Data-Communications Testing Through Successful Partnership Between Academia And Industry

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DURHAM, N.H. - The University of New Hampshire InterOperability Laboratory (UNH-IOL), the only tech lab and test house owned by academia yet driven by the computer networking industries it serves, recently celebrated 20 years of operation since its founding in 1988.

Since its inception, the UNH-IOL has been a one-of-a-kind, hybrid industry and academic technology and testing lab that offers [students](#) something more than they normally receive from computer classes: paid training in leading-edge and popular technologies with the opportunity to work side-by-side with professional engineers in their future field of employment. Over the years, the facility has earned a sterling reputation among networking engineers as the premier third-party test facility for data communications technology.

The lab employs 117 students, faculty, and staff in this unprecedented collaborative partnership with industry. In exchange for annual membership dues, companies ship products such as cable modems, HDTVs, printers, computer components, network servers and switches to be tested for compliance with industry standards and interoperability with compatible products and technologies. UNH students who work at the UNH-IOL leave college with training and experience working with numerous companies, making them very competitive applicants in the job market of their chosen field.

"Our goal with the IOL was to build an organization that would be 'student heavy,' putting students into an environment similar to an apprenticeship program that was technically focused with lightweight agreements that would allow cooperation among vendors without heavy legal analysis" said William Lenharth, one of the lab's original founders and associate research professor in the university's research computing and electrical and computer engineering departments.

"The UNH-IOL is one of the most brilliant hidden gems of UNH. It has quietly earned an international reputation as a center of excellence in engineering circles and data-communications companies since well before the advent of the public Internet," said UNH President Mark W. Huddleston. "The lab's combination of ground-up training and the resume-building opportunity for students to work with real companies, many of them leaders in computer networking, is without parallel at any other college or university."

Founded in 1988, the UNH-IOL is one of networking's premier third-party proving grounds for developing technologies. Approximately 200 companies use the lab's 32,000+ sq. foot facility to extend development and quality assurance efforts by testing and fine-tuning technologies, protocols and products for multi-vendor interoperability and conformance to standards. For more information, visit <http://www.iol.unh.edu>.

