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RPI creating better lighting

Research could reduce need for sleep inducing drugs, cut risk of some types of cancers

By TIM O'BRIEN, Staff writer
First published in print: Monday, October 6, 2008

TROY ♦ An \$18.5 million grant will help Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute make a better light bulb.

While it sounds simple, the college says its work will not only create more energy efficient lighting. But it could also have implications for everything from biotechnology to transportation and could enable lighting to be custom designed for homes and offices, according to information being released today by the school.

The college has received a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation, and the money will be used for research to create innovative lighting that uses less energy.

The Engineering Research Center for Smart Lighting will be the only engineering research

center in the state funded by the National Science Foundation. RPI will partner on the project with Boston University and the University of New Mexico.

The Smart Lighting Center will investigate and develop light-emitting diode (LED) technologies. The efforts could have applications to computer networking and displays.

By providing better support to people's natural rhythms, smart lighting could reduce dependency on sleep-inducing drugs and even cut the risk of certain types of cancer, the college said.

The project is expected to receive up to \$50 million in funding over the next 10 years. Most of the funding will come from the National Science Foundation, with additional support from New York state, RPI and 18 industrial partners.

The university received \$3.25 million in September for the center's first year, a figure forecast to increase over the next several years. New York State has committed \$700,000 to the center's first year, and first-year funding from industrial partners is expected to be nearly \$1 million. RPI itself will provide more than \$500,000.

E. Fred Schubert, Wellfleet Senior Constellation Professor of Future Chips, leads the center. Twenty faculty researchers from Rensselaer, along with 10 researchers from Boston University and the University of New Mexico, will staff the center. Students, postdoctoral researchers, and visiting industry engineers will also be regular contributors to the research.

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