WASHINGTON – In a press release dated May 14, 2010, the U.S. Navy’s Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) announced the signing of a contract agreement May 6 to establish a Naval Engineering Education Center (NEEC). The purpose of the NEEC will be to educate and develop world-class naval systems engineers for the Navy’s civilian acquisition, engineering and science workforce.

Led by faculty from the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan, the NEEC Consortium will initially be comprised of 15 colleges and universities, along with the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE) and the Society of Naval Architects and Engineering (SNAME). Other colleges and universities included in the NEEC Consortium include Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Pennsylvania State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Webb Institute, Florida State University, Florida Atlantic University, Old Dominion University, Tennessee State University, Stevens Institute of Technology, University of New Orleans, University of Iowa, University of Texas-San Antonio, and University of Washington. U.S. Navy Center for Innovation in Ship Design, located at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock Division, will support the NEEC.

“The NEEC will provide NAVSEA a pipeline of engineers in critical engineering career fields to address the challenges we face in building and sustaining the 21st century Navy,” said Brian Persons, NAVSEA executive director. “This is a huge step to help address Navy research and engineering development needs and challenges. It is the newest tool in NAVSEA’s Talent Management Strategy to develop, attract and retain the broader more capable workforce.”

The NEEC Consortium will increase the number of students who graduate with an accredited degree; provide world-class faculty specialized in naval engineering; coordinate employee development opportunities to retain naval engineering talent for the Navy; and increase the availability of naval engineering education programs and courses across universities and colleges.
A key part of the NEEC is using project-based education to provide naval engineering experience to students. NEEC project teams from the universities, along with a NAVSEA engineer or scientist assigned to the team, will tackle current and future technical challenges, including the use of alternative energy sources, energy conservation, total ownership cost reduction, use of unmanned vehicles, advanced ship design methods and maintenance reduction. Through NAVSEA internships and at-sea opportunities on U.S. Navy ships, students will receive relevant, hands-on naval engineering experience.

Additionally, the NEEC universities will partner with ASNE and SNAME to develop a robust program for K-12 outreach to increase a student pipeline across the nation interested in pursuing education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM, fields.

NEEC director Steven Ceccio (Departments ME and NA&ME) and co-director David Singer (NA&ME) stated, “We are very pleased that so many members of the naval engineering community have come together in this effort. Michigan has a long and proud tradition in education and research in support of the Navy, and we are proud to have this opportunity to lead the NEEC. We look forward to working with all our partners as we develop the next generation of naval engineers.”