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Engineering opens year with new lab celebrations

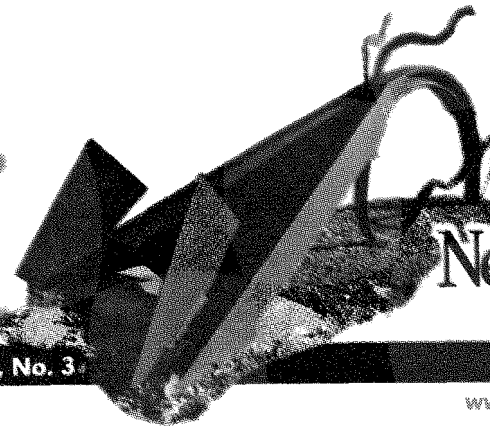
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Engineering opens year with new lab celebration

By Ashley Washburn
Engineering

Chemical and biomolecular engineering seniors returned from winter break to receive another gift — a new unit operations lab.

The Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony Jan. 6 to mark the lab's move from the first floor of Othmer Hall to the basement.

The new lab is designed to mimic a factory so students can use equipment similar to that found in factories and research labs, said William Velander, chair

of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. The lab features enhanced utility hookups necessary for chemical processing.

"This is really a beautiful facility," Velander said. "It's a state-of-the-art unit operations lab."

The lab is used for Chemical Engineering 430, a senior capstone class. It has stations for chemical reactions, continuous and batch distillation and other devices used to separate chemical mixtures. Students can control equipment manually, or remotely from a control room overlooking the workspace.

Construction began in early

2005. The space was configured for equipment that uses steam, pressurized air, heated and cooled water, and electricity. Velander said the lab is unique because the services needed to operate chemical processing equipment are at a significantly larger scale than those needed in a typical chemistry lab.

Lab manager Leonard Akert started moving equipment into the lab Dec. 18 and finished in time for the spring semester.

"Students need to have hands-on knowledge so they know how to work in the industry," Akert said. "This room is much better for that type of operation."



COURTESY PHOTO

Student Tim Carmen, chemical engineering, examines equipment in the new Unit Ops lab in the basement of Othmer Hall