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iDigFossils receives \$1.2 million, will donate 3-D printers to children

Cecilia Mazanec, Alligator Contributing Writer Feb 16, 2016

A UF professor will help give 3-D printers and scanners to children in Florida and California.

Pavlo “Pasha” Antonenko, a UF associate professor of educational technology, helped lead “iDigFossils,” a project awarded almost \$1.2 million by the National Science Foundation. The funding to give students scanners and printers started Monday.

The 3-year project will allow kindergarten through high-school students to develop skills and interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses.



Through 3-D technology, students in selected schools will scan and print fossils to keep at the school for them and future students to use. Antonenko said he hopes students use fossils to make hypotheses and inferences about the animals.

The idea for the project started Fall 2014 when History walked through the museum halls and

Claudia Grant, a UF education technology graduate, scanned the fossils into 3-D format.



“I said, ‘It would be so cool to have this in a 3-D format and in a classroom,’” she said.

The scans of fossils, in addition to being kept at the schools, will be uploaded to a virtual database where anyone with a 3-D printer can download them, Antonenko said.

With the \$1.2 million budget, Antonenko and his team will select 10 schools to each receive a \$10,000 cart that includes a 3-D scanner, a 3-D printer and five laptops.

In addition, teachers who participate will each receive a stipend of \$1,500 a year.



Antonenko said he is looking to increase the participation of the underrepresented groups in science, such as women and minorities.

For this reason, one school he chose is UF’s P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School.

He said he wants students to find an aspect of the curriculum that interests them and apply it in life. Without application, he said, students won’t retain the math and technology skills they learn in school.

“When you don’t use it, you lose it,” he said.



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