



RIT receives \$1.1M grant from NASA

By (<mailto:rbj@rbj.net>) NATE DOUGHERTY (<mailto:natdougherty@rbj.net>)
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Rochester Institute of Technology has been awarded a \$1.1 million grant from NASA to advance research into infrared detectors used to study deep space.

The detectors developed through the work of Raytheon Vision Systems can be used to support NASA missions to understand the nature of dark matter and dark energy, RIT officials said. It also can be used to find Earth-like exoplanets.

“Right now, infrared detectors are so expensive that there are only a few on the world’s biggest telescopes—Keck, Gemini and the Very Large Telescope,” said Donald Figer, director of the Center for Detectors at RIT. “Those are the only facilities that can afford them, and then they can only afford a few. They have big telescopes with big image planes and tiny detectors in the middle.”

In 2012, RIT was awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation for a similar collaboration between the Center for Detectors and Raytheon. The NSF award supports research advancing infrared detector technology for use on ground-based telescopes and in the fields of remote sensing and medical imaging, RIT officials noted.

“The search for dark energy and dark matter are the major goals for space astronomy missions in the next decade,” Figer said. “High-performance

detectors are essential for the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope, the mission envisioned to achieve this goal.”

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