Marine mission
UNE Marine Science Dept. has new focus

By DINA MENDROS  "SIDEBAR"
BIDDEFORD — A number of changes are afoot at the University of New England’s Marine Science Department. The changes could mean help for Maine’s fisheries and fishermen, and new research and career opportunities for students.

The new direction for the department was announced after the end of the spring semester. The university sent out a notice stating that new undergraduate programs were being developed in the marine science program “to meet growing demand and career opportunities.”

Near the end of that statement was mention that the new development went hand in hand with the closure of the university’s Marine Animal Rehabilitation Center, or MARC, where seals and other rescued marine mammals were nursed back to health. For many, including the media, that became the focus.

But now that the new school year is underway, faculty members and students are focused on the future and are excited by the changes taking place at the Marine Science Center, which first opened in 2001.

The UNE leadership vision for marine programs is to develop the next generation of coastal leaders as informed citizens, stewards, scientists, business leaders and policymakers,” said Marine Sciences Department Chair Dr. Barry Costs-Pierce in the spring.

To this end, new programs, new research opportunities and new courses are being developed.

One of these new opportunities, made possible by a grant received by the school, is five-year, $400,000 awarded by the National Science Foundation. The funds will be used to launch Project TURBO, which stands for The Undergraduate Saco River Biodiversity Observatory.

Principal investigator of the project, Dr. Markos Frendrich, assistant department chair of the Department of Marine Sciences, explains: “We will create a project-oriented learning experience using the local estu-