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Filling a Deeper Talent Pool

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FILLING A DEEPER TALENT POOL

A national grant will help develop capable students to fill an expanding need in the state
A prestigious national grant will ensure Kansas State University students find success in science, technology, engineering and math — or STEM — careers, regardless of their race, ethnicity or economic status.

A team of faculty and administrators from the colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education and Engineering drafted a proposal that led to the university being named the lead organization for a $2.5 million five-year grant from the National Science Foundation’s Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation, or LSAMP.

“One of the exciting aspects of this project is that it will develop an innovative pathway for diverse students in STEM programs that addresses regional and state workforce needs,” said university Provost and Senior Vice President April Mason, principal investigator of the project.

Linda Thurston is an associate dean for research and external funding in the College of Education and a co-principal investigator. She said Kansas’ LSAMP project, Kansas Pathways to STEM, will positively influence future workforce diversity in the region by developing sustainable STEM pathways for underrepresented minority students.

“Pathways to STEM will partner with university offices such as admissions and developing scholars, as well as the STEM departments in the four partner institutions. Both Kansas State University and its LSAMP partners have developed initiatives that complement those already in place. These initiatives include:

- Focused and enhanced recruiting
- Development of detailed transfer guides
- Training for admissions personnel and academic advisers
- Student enhancement programs such as research opportunities and internships

Beth Montelone, associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences and a co-principal investigator, said the Kansas Pathways to STEM LSAMP program is aligned with the Kansas Board of Regents’ strategic plan, Foresight 2020, which has set a goal of 60 percent of Kansans achieving a postsecondary education by 2020.

“Among the 42 LSAMP programs in the country, ours stands out because all our partners are Hispanic-serving institutions,” Montelone said. “Particularly, we’re focusing on students from groups that have not been historically represented in higher education, particularly in STEM fields.”

The National Science Foundation’s LSAMP program was established by Congress in 1991 in recognition of Louis Stokes, an African-American congressman from Ohio. The program’s goal is to increase the quality and quantity of minorities who successfully complete bachelor’s degrees in STEM majors.

In addition to Montelone and Thurston, the project’s co-principle investigators are Bette Grauer, assistant dean in the College of Engineering, and Zelia Wiley, assistant dean in the College of Agriculture.

By Megan Saunders, Communications and Marketing

— April Mason