



News Release

Major NSF Award creating diverse STEM pipeline to address state's skilled workforce shortage

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NEW BRITAIN, Conn. – The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a \$5 million grant to Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) for a program aimed at increasing the diversity of students who pursue careers in computer science, mathematics, and physics.

Over the next five years, the Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics Scholarship Program of Central Connecticut will provide both financial and academic support to approximately 90 under-represented, low-income students enrolled at either CCSU, Manchester Community College (MCC), or Tunxis Community College.

“We are extremely grateful for this very significant NSF award. A new generation of highly-skilled workers is critical to our state’s economic vitality, and we are pleased to be collaborating with two of our community colleges to address that need by creating a much-needed pipeline of diverse students,” says Zulma R. Toro, president of Central Connecticut State University.

“I thank Dr. Stan Kurkovsky for his creativity and resourcefulness in bringing this grant to CCSU. It’s yet another example of our goal at Central to leverage alternative revenue sources in support of academic excellence,” she added.

Scholarship recipients will be in line for financial aid of up to \$10,000 a year and while significant, this program addresses more than the student’s financial burden. A team of professors, led by Kurkovsky, professor of Computer Science at CCSU, will implement a comprehensive strategy for supporting these students all along the way.

“Our scholarship recipients will form a cohort and, together, they will receive intensive enrichment and interventions designed to help them succeed academically,” explains Kurkovsky. “It’s a distinguishing feature of our program and likely set our application apart from the nearly 500 NSF grant competitors. The competition for these grants is fierce,” he added. Over the past decade, Kurkovsky’s work to increase the number of students preparing for STEM careers has earned him two previous NSF grants.

On this initiative, Kurkovsky is collaborating with Karen Birch, professor of Applied Science at Tunxis, and Sharale Golding, professor of Science at MCC. Support is also coming from Nimmi Sharma, professor of Physics at CCSU, and Ivan Gotchev, professor of Mathematical Sciences at CCSU.

As part of the program, students will receive individual mentoring and advising by a dedicated faculty member, specialized tutoring, and peer mentoring. The program will also include field trips, participation in faculty-led research projects, internships, and guest lectures by industry and research leaders. Upon graduation, they will receive job placement assistance.

Throughout the program’s rollout, Linda Clark, associate professor of Educational Leadership, Policy, & Instruction Technology at CCSU, will evaluate the enrichment and intervention activities to determine which ones were most effective in helping the students succeed.

Applications for the Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics Scholarship Program of Central Connecticut are now being accepted. For additional information, go to www.ccsu.edu/csmp.

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