

SIUE Receives \$990K NSF Grant, Goal is to Attract, Retain and Promote Diverse STEM Faculty

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a three-year \$991,073 grant to Southern Illinois University Edwardsville for the project “ADVANCE Adaptation: Toward an Inclusive Model of Excellence in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).” SIUE Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, PhD, is the principal investigator. The award began this month and runs through September 30, 2022.

Cobb is joined in the project by co-principal investigators Lynn Bartels, PhD, professor of psychology in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior (SEHHB); Jessica Harris, PhD, interim assistant provost for inclusive academic excellence; Leah O'Brien, PhD, professor of chemistry in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS); and Susan Morgan, PhD, associate dean for research and graduate studies in the SIUE Graduate School, and professor in the Department of Civil Engineering.

Serving as senior personnel on the leadership team are Jamie Ball, JD, director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, Access and Title IX Coordination, and Sandra Weissinger, PhD, associate professor of sociology in CAS.

The project's goals include: increasing recruitment and hiring of diverse female STEM faculty by implementing the Progressive Recruitment Initiatives Mark Excellence (PRIME) program; increasing retention of diverse female STEM faculty by improving departmental climate and support for female faculty with the Keeping Educators through Equity Programming (KEEP) initiatives; and increasing promotion of diverse female STEM faculty by mitigating bias in the tenure and promotion review processes through the University Promotion (UP) initiative.

Cobb pointed to an earlier NSF ADVANCE IT-Catalyst award in 2010 as providing the foundation for this grant. "Previously, our team collected data, planned and set the stage for longer-term institutional change efforts to enhance gender representation and gender equity among STEM faculty," she said. "With this new award, we can pursue the next steps of the work. By focusing on the goals and strategies in this project plan, we will help strengthen processes that serve our goals of inclusivity and equity, and broaden representation in our faculty."

Together these collaborative initiatives provide a comprehensive approach that will result in diverse applicant hires, improved retention and promotion of diverse female STEM faculty, and stronger academic programs at SIUE. The integrated approach will serve as a model for similar institutions.

"This project is an exciting opportunity to create substantial, lasting changes that improve the work climate for SIUE faculty and SIUE students," Morgan said. "Improved gender equity will translate into stronger academic programs that attract quality faculty and students in the increasingly competitive higher education market."

The project has national implications. A more diverse faculty will retain and graduate more diverse students in STEM, strengthening and expanding the U.S. STEM workforce. Two graduate student researchers will document the faculty response and

impact of the initiatives. Results will be shared at national venues, through an SIUE ADVANCE project website, and through presentations to interested internal audiences and external audiences.

“While the representation of women in academic STEM disciplines has increased steadily over time, there remain ongoing challenges, such as disproportionate underrepresentation in specific disciplines, and underrepresentation at the rank of full professor and in positions of leadership,” Harris said. “These inequities and others must be addressed in higher education if we are to meet the growing demands of a 21st century global economy.”

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 13,000.