

STOCKTON COLLEGE

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Stockton Receives One of Largest Science and Math Grants in its History to Provide Scholarships to 25 Deserving Students

Nearly \$600,000 Awarded by National Science Foundation to Help Support and Retain Science, Technology Engineering and Math Students

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Galloway Township, NJ – A National Science Foundation (NSF) grant recently awarded to The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey is the largest competitive grant in its history that directly supports students with scholarship funds. It will advance Stockton's science, technology, engineering and math programs while greatly reducing the financial burden of college for 25 bright and deserving students.

The grant, totaling \$597,992 over four years, allows Stockton to pass the funds directly to the students in the form of scholarships. Stockton received \$153,468 for this academic year and awarded \$5,200 to each of the 25 students.

Stockton plans to award 25 additional scholarships at \$5,200 each over the next three academic years.

"The award by the NSF is obviously significant in terms of dollars, but more importantly it will have a major positive impact on the lives of 25 of our deserving students," Stockton Provost and Executive Vice President Harvey Kesselman said. "A financial award of this magnitude reduces the cost of attending Stockton approximately in half."

The remaining 15 percent of this year's grant has been allocated for activities to aid the recruitment of students in these fields. These include enrollment initiatives such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) awareness campaigns, faculty involvement at the high school level of students, parents, teachers and career counselors, a presence at open houses and admissions programs, and more.

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Additionally, the funds are used to retain students once they are enrolled at the College. According to Jill C. Gerhardt, associate professor of computer science and information systems and principal investigator and director of the grant. "Five special courses for the encouragement of present and future STEM students will result from this funding, as well as new research and educational opportunities, mentoring activities and a special NSF Scholar Seminar," she said.

"The objective is for increased enrollment in STEM fields, particularly increased female enrollment, which has traditionally lagged behind, despite a majority of female enrollment overall," Gerhardt said. "This grant will enable us to increase retention, develop increased participation and interest in these fields in high school and provide opportunities for job placement and entrance to graduate school."

The grant was marshaled through the offices of the School of Business, under the direction of Dean Janet Wagner. Co-principal investigators of the grant include faculty members Vince Cicirello, associate professor of computer science; Brandy Rapatski, assistant professor of mathematics; Monir H. Sharobeam, professor of computational science, and Aakash Taneja, associate professor of computer science and information systems. Senior members of the grant team included faculty members Drs. Russell Manson, Saralyn G. Mathis, Michael J. Olan, Robert J. Olsen and Yitzhak Sharon.

Stockton already is a leader in the recruitment, retention and graduation of students in math and science, according to President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. "Stockton graduates 25 percent of the students in these areas among all of the state colleges and universities," said Dr. Saatkamp. "This certainly enhances our efforts."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics in its 2011 projections, employment in professional, scientific and technical services is expected to grow by 34 percent, adding about 2.7 million new jobs by 2018. Employment in computer systems design and related services is expected to rise by 45 percent, accounting for nearly one-fourth of all new jobs in this industry sector. "Employment growth will be driven by increased demand for the design and integration of sophisticated networks and Internet and intranet sites," Gerhardt said.

"The objective of our STEM project resulting in this grant is to attract students and effectively train them," Gerhardt said. "We are helping to produce the scientists, engineers and mathematicians to fill these positions and others that are desperately needed in the United States."

Although the funds are designated for students in the scientific, technical and mathematical fields, most of the special activities funded through the grant are open to all Stockton students, such as free tutoring and a "bridge" program to help students with calculus.

Gerhardt stated that one selected student had recently transferred into Stockton from a

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community college. "The student received the notice of the opportunity a week after coming here and two weeks later was surprised and overwhelmed to learn of the \$5,200 award."

The grant is the second major one received by Stockton from the NSF. A similar grant of \$395,934 was awarded in 2003, in which 90 percent of the funding went to scholarships. Thus, NSF has awarded Stockton a total of \$880,000 in scholarship funds.