

California State University, Fresno wins \$1.4 million grant to enhance geoscience diversity

The National Science Foundation awarded a nearly \$1.4 million grant to California State University, Fresno for a project to increase diversity within the academic disciplines that make up the geosciences.

The grant will create the Geoscience Mentoring, Education, Teaching Research and Outreach (METRO) Center at Fresno State. The geoscience umbrella includes geology, environmental science, hydrology, air quality and atmospheric chemistry, meteorology and climatology.

Funding for the grant comes from federal economic stimulus money allocated through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Dr. Alam Hasson, associate professor of chemistry, will direct the project, which involves faculty members from Fresno State's Departments of Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Science and Geography), and from State Center Community College District's Fresno City and Reedley colleges.

"We are faced with some daunting environmental problems, including climate change, poor air quality and increasing demands for declining natural resources," said Hasson. "The need for well-trained geoscientists in the region has never been more critical."

The METRO Center will provide research opportunities within Fresno State geoscience research laboratories to 24 undergraduate students each year. They will receive intensive mentoring and career guidance to prepare them for graduate study and the workforce. The center also will provide education and training resources for K-12 teachers and students.

Hasson said Fresno State has a number of outstanding faculty members conducting important research in the geosciences. "This grant will provide students with a tremendous opportunity to be involved in, and contribute to, this work," he said.

Hasson said the grant is an example of a concerted effort across campus to address issues in the geosciences. The university has hired faculty members in this area in recent years and the recently formed Institute of Climate Change, Oceans and Atmosphere has been coordinating research and educational efforts across traditional academic disciplines.

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