NEWS RELEASE

SUNY ONEONTA RECEIVES $612,515 GRANT FOR STEM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

March 22, 2013

ONEONTA, N.Y. — SUNY Oneonta has received a $612,515 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for “Critical MaSS: Math and Science Scholars,” a scholarship program aimed at enabling students who would otherwise face significant barriers to graduate and enter careers or advanced degree programs in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

The five-year grant, which was awarded through the NSF’s S-STEM Program, will support 24 SUNY Oneonta students in the fields of Biology, Chemistry & Biochemistry, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science & Statistics, Physics & Astronomy, or Environmental Science with scholarships of up to $5,400 per year.

"I am delighted that the NSF has recognized SUNY Oneonta’s critical contribution to the pipeline for STEM careers and graduate studies," said SUNY Oneonta Provost Maria Thompson. "This grant will help ease the financial burden of college among several highly qualified students enrolled in the sciences and related majors. Such a large investment in the college also signifies the excellence of our faculty in mentoring undergraduates and preparing them to continue scholarly research and pursue advanced degrees after graduating."

Incoming freshmen who meet the program’s academic requirements and demonstrate substantial financial need will be recruited to begin the program this fall. The goal is to have at least half of the scholars come from the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).

“Although SUNY Oneonta is well known for having low student debt costs at graduation, there are still many students whose families have difficulty paying for college,” said project coordinator Dr. John Schaumloffel, chair of the college’s Chemistry and Biochemistry Department. “The S-STEM program will offer a wide variety of experiences and opportunities to help students graduate in their major, in four years, as engaged scientists and mathematicians, while helping to reduce their debt burden.”
Working closely with Schaumloffel on the project are Dr. Jennifer Withington, assistant professor of Biology; Dr. Jason Smolinski, assistant professor of Physics and Astronomy; and Dr. Nathan Gonyea, associate professor of Educational Psychology, Counseling and Special Education.

In addition to reducing student debt, the project seeks to improve educational outcomes for academically qualified STEM majors; provide new team-building activities and multidisciplinary educational experiences; encourage undergraduate research and/or professional travel; and enhance opportunities for scholars to secure internships, careers or opportunities for graduate studies.

“We are uniquely positioned to make the most of this opportunity because of our strong collaborative history between the STEM departments, CAMP, EOP, the Division of Education and many other units on campus to provide a comprehensive approach to enhancing student engagement and learning,” Schaumloffel said.

In addition to the scholarships (up to $21,600 per student), students will have access to a variety of required and optional experiences to bolster their chances of academic success and increase their level of engagement. For example, during their junior or senior years, each scholar will have access to up to $1,500 to use, at their discretion, to fund a research project or professional development activity, such as attending a scientific meeting.

Project collaborators will evaluate the 24 scholars’ progress, satisfaction and achievement during their time at SUNY Oneonta and for 24 months after they graduate.

More information on the National Science Foundation's S-STEM program is available at https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5257

More information on “Critical MaSS: Math and Science Scholars” is available from Dr. John Schaumloffel at john.schaumloffel@oneonta.edu.

###