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## Cal-Bridge program receives \$5 million grant for doctoral pathways at 25 campuses

CSUSB is part of a consortium of 16 CSU and nine UC campuses collectively awarded a five-year, \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to increase diversity in physics and astronomy through the Cal-Bridge program.

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Cal State San Bernardino is part of a consortium of 16 California State University and nine University of California campuses collectively awarded a five-year, \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to dramatically increase diversity in physics and astronomy through the Cal-Bridge program.

“We are trying to increase the diversity that we see in the STEM pipeline through graduate school,” said Carol Hood, a CSUSB professor of physics and co-director of the southern portion of the Cal-Bridge program. Hood has been with the program since it was launched four years ago.

Currently, students from underrepresented minority groups represent 30 percent of the U.S. population, but less than 4 percent of physics and astronomy Ph.D.s awarded nationwide.

The Cal-Bridge program creates a pathway for students from multiple CSU campuses to doctorate programs in physics and astronomy at UCs across California. The program has already had a national impact on the number of students from underrepresented groups graduating with a physics degree and matriculating to Ph.D. programs in physics or astronomy.

The new grant allows Cal-Bridge to expand from about a dozen scholars per year to as many as 50 statewide. The national average of underrepresented minorities, or URM students, earning a Ph.D. in these fields is about 80 per year. Cal-Bridge is led by principal investigator and director, Alexander Rudolph, a Cal Poly Pomona professor of physics and astronomy.

The program has 35 active scholars in the CSU, 22 in the Southern portion. CSUSB has had more scholars, 13, with five currently still on campus, than any other CSU. Only Cal State Northridge has more active scholars at six, Hood said.

Out of the CSUSB scholars who have graduated, seven were accepted to graduate school, with six currently attending UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, the University of Maryland, the University of Arizona and the University of Wyoming.

The Cal-Bridge program has also had five National Science Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship awards, two of them coming from CSUSB, and three honorable mentions with two from CSUSB, Hood said.

Cal-Bridge scholars are recruited from 15 CSU campuses and more than 30 community colleges in the Cal-Bridge network, with the help of local faculty and staff liaisons at each campus.

The need for the program arose as educators sought to increase the number of minority students entering doctoral programs, Hood said

“The physics and astronomy community in the past five years to 10 years has really been more proactive than they have in the past about looking at the range of diversities that they see at the variety of levels,” Hood said.

“Our students have been eligible for a summer research program targeting CSU students for a number of years that precipitated the Cal-Bridge program, and the goals of that one have been very similar,” Hood said. “But it was more about getting students thinking about research early. Research is one of those high impact practices that can get students interested and help with retention. Our students are primarily from non-white backgrounds, and maybe this is a way we can start to increase the diversity of our field at the undergrad level.”

The Cal-Bridge program has been highly successful in its first five years in developing a pipeline of highly diverse, qualified scholars, many of whom have already successfully matriculated to a Ph.D. program in physics or astronomy.

The program just selected its fifth cohort of 27 scholars from 10 different CSU campuses across the state, bringing the total number of scholars to 61 in five cohorts, including 35 Latinos, seven African-Americans and 27 women (16 of the 27 women are from underrepresented minority groups).

In the last three years, 19 of 21 Cal-Bridge Scholars who have earned their bachelor’s degree in physics have begun or will attend Ph.D. programs in physics or astronomy at top programs nationally, including UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, Harvard University, Northwestern University, the University of Maryland, Michigan State University and Penn State University.

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