STEM and Branches: Update on the Columbus State University STEM-II Initiative

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Abstract:
Two USG STEM Initiative awards to Columbus State University have spawned the growth of several STEM and STEM education programs and nearly $2.6 million in grants. We provide an update on STEM-II initiative projects including a peer leader program for core math and science courses, a faculty mini-grants program to promote scholarship on teaching and learning and awareness of best practices models, and a service learning course. The infrastructure that emerged through the first STEM Initiative and continued to develop with the STEM-II initiative paved the way for a $1.4 million UTeach replication grant and a $1.2 million Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program grant. We describe key developments in these two programs designed to recruit and prepare more STEM teachers.

Faculty SoTL Mini-grants
1. Development of Undergraduate Curriculum in the Area of Experimental Physical Chemistry, by Rajeev Dahke
   Outcomes: New techniques available for use in courses; Article published
2. Use of a Writing Consultant in a Science Course, by John Barone
   Outcome: College of Letters and Sciences Faculty Fellow for Outstanding Teaching
3. Evaluation of Two Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies in BIOL 2221, by Kathleen Hughes
   Status: Second year of funding
4. Methodology and/or Technology: Making a Difference in Improving Students’ Problem Solving Skills, by Zdeslav Hipcic
   Preliminary Results: Those who attended PIL sessions earned significantly greater course grades (722 cases reported grades as points; t(722)=2.84, p<0.005).
   Data Analysis: only used courses that had complete PIL session attendance records, and excluded all cases of academic withdrawal. Includes 1000 cases.
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Program Benefits:
Development of new pedagogies
Promoting faculty interest in SoTL
Program Challenges:
• Difficult to get faculty to apply for program

Peer Instruction Project
Project elements:
PIL attends all lectures, meets 4/semester with instructor
Help sessions avail. to all students enrolled w/instructor
Two weekly PIL support group meetings and guidance

Challenges:
• Help session attendance was low, but improved in later semesters
• Matching peer leader schedules to students and courses
• Confound: some Peer Instruction Leaders are also tutors

Service Learning Course
Employed two Master Teachers
Responsible for mentoring students, ensuring quality of lessons
Developed course: Inquiry Approaches to Teaching
Open to students in all majors
One credit hour
Students observe twice in elementary classrooms
Student pairs teach three math/science lessons
Part of the UTeach Columbus program—reimbursed for tuition after course completion

Developing a STEM Teacher Recruitment Pipeline
UTeach Columbus
Through a newly designed, streamlined curriculum and the support of highly experienced Master Teachers, university students prepare to teach secondary math and science via a model that has proven highly successful around the U.S. at recruiting teachers who stick with the profession and excel at inquiry-based instructional methods. This program has been made possible through Georgia’s Race to the Top funding, with a grant worth up to $1.4 million. CSU committed to substantial matching contributions in order to demonstrate support, and long-term planning for the sustainability of this program.

CRAFT-STEM
The Columbus Region Academy of Future Teachers of STEM is an NSF Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship program funded with grant number 1136356. Program components include a STEM Honors Summer Camp engaging high school juniors and seniors in STEM research and activities, S450 summer internships for CSU freshmen and sophomores, and scholarships worth $10,000-$13,000. This five year grant is worth approximately $1.2 million.

MAYU – Math And Science Teachers’ Council
A group of STEM and STEM education faculty, together with staff from CSU STEM outreach centers (Oxbow Meadows, Coca-Cola Space Science Center, Columbus Regional Math Collaborative) working to promote K-12 teacher preparation and improve university student learning. Formed in conjunction with the first STEM Initiative.

Math & Science Learning Center
A community resource dedicated to enhancing the learning of math and science through development, best-practices training for college faculty as well as in-service and pre-service K-12 teachers. The center also provides tutoring and tutor training. Established with STEM Initiative funding.

See our presentation on Friday