

10/14/2006

CCSU receives funding for scholarships

By Scott Whipple, Herald staff

NEW BRITAIN -- **Central Connecticut State University** will receive nearly half a million dollars over the next five years to fund scholarships for computer science, mathematics and physics students.

The funding comes from the National Science Foundation (NSF) through its "Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics" program. The program awards grants to institutions of higher education to support scholarships for academically talented, financially needy students, enabling them to enter the workforce after completing an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate-level degree in science and engineering disciplines.

Carl Lovitt, CCSU provost and vice president for academic affairs praised faculty members in Central's departments of computer science, mathematics and physics. Their grant proposal led to the creation of over 20 scholarships for students of up to \$5,200 per year for up to four years starting in the fall of 2007.

"Our program will help us attract and retain academically talented and underrepresented students from low-income and disadvantaged families who pursue degrees in computer science, mathematics and physics (CSMP) disciplines," Lovitt said. "This enables us to offer them financial support, academic support, and intellectual enrichment opportunities."

The program targets promising students enrolled in CSMP and related programs at CCSU, as well as prospective students recruited through public schools, two-year colleges, and community organizations," Lovitt said. "Scholars in the program will be assigned faculty mentors and receive a wide range of support in academic and career planning, mentoring, counseling, and internships.

Stan Kurkovsky, associate professor of computer science, is primarily in charge of the NSF-funded project. He said CCSU's proposal was selected for funding from the pool of almost 400 proposals.

CCSU already offers "excellent academic programs in CSMP disciplines, as indicated by various accreditations augmented by high quality support services and facilities," Kurkovsky said. "We feel it is very important to create a supportive environment for scholars, and ensure their academic success, retention, and timely graduation."

Kurkovsky said scholars in the program will increase diversity in the student population and workforce, and serve as role models to members of their communities.

A CCSU management team to monitor all aspects of the scholarship program includes Kurkovsky, Ivan Gotchev, professor of mathematical sciences; Bradley Kjell, professor of computer science; and Nimmi C. Parikh Sharma, professor of physics and earth sciences. They will be joined by members of CCSU's Academic Affairs, Financial Aid, Recruitment and Admissions, and Career Services administration, as well as industry representatives.

Scott Whipple can be reached at swhipple@newbritainherald.com.