

CSM receives \$950K National Science Foundation grant

Posted by [Alan Van Wormer](#) On 02/10/2019

The College of Southern Maryland will provide 96 new scholarships to students attending CSM to study in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics thanks to a \$953,243 award by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM) program.

LA PLATA, Md. - The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) will provide 96 new scholarships to students attending CSM to study in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics thanks to a \$953,243 award by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM) program. The grant helps to address the need for a high-quality STEM workforce in a variety of STEM disciplines throughout Southern Maryland.

"This is a very competitive program," shared NSF Program Director and Expert Elizabeth Teles, who oversaw the grant award. "CSM succeeded in securing additional grant money because they proved that they are building on success."

"It was pretty exciting to receive the news," said CSM Mathematics Professor Sandra Poinsett, who was the lead on the grant request submission. "Our team worked on writing and rewriting this grant, and moving through the NSF's reviews, for a very long time."

This is the second time that CSM has received funding from the NSF S-STEM program. The first grant of \$586,484 that was awarded in July 2012 was nearly doubled this cycle because of CSM's students' continued, proven achievements.

Among those students achieving success is S-STEM grant recipient and CSM Alumna Parita Patel, of La Plata, who began her academic career at CSM in 2012. Since graduating with her associate degree in math in 2014, Patel transferred to the University of Maryland College Park to complete her bachelor's degree in biological studies. Last fall, she was accepted into the health policy management master's program at Temple University.

"CSM and that S-STEM scholarship helped me so much," Patel said. "Because of the S-STEM grant, I didn't have to focus on getting a job. I was able to stay solely focused on my education."

For CSM STEM students, "proven success" is also demonstrated by strong partnerships that ensure seamless transition from CSM to four-year institutions. In the past reporting year, 1,682 CSM students transferred to 239 four-year colleges and universities in 44 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico within the subsequent academic year. Sixty-four percent of those students transferred to in-state, four-year institutions such as St. Mary's College of Maryland (62 students), Towson University (158 students), University of Maryland College Park (210 students) and University of Maryland University College (393 students)

In addition, CSM has in place more than [50 guaranteed transfer agreements](#) with partnering colleges and universities, several of which are related to STEM fields including agreements with Capella University, Capitol Technology University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, George Washington University, Morgan State University, Southern New Hampshire University, University of Maryland College Park, University of Maryland University College, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and West Virginia University. And CSM remains committed to expanding current agreements and to developing new agreements with other Maryland postsecondary institutions, shared Poinsett.

As much as student success was pivotal to CSM receiving additional funds, Poinsett added that the award increased because the demand to fill STEM-related jobs has grown. In the grant request, Poinsett and her project team explained how Southern Maryland's three counties are "located at the epicenter of military and federal government installations supported by thousands of private sector contractors and suppliers."

Exelon Generation, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative, military installations, Dominion Power and other energy companies are working with CSM to grow a workforce of engineers and technicians. "Southern Maryland companies stand ready to assist the program with mentors, job shadowing opportunities, tours, presentations, internships, and other experiences," she shared.

"The STEM workforce demands for the tri-county region are staggering," Poinsett and her team wrote in the grant request.

In 2017, the U.S. [Bureau of Labor Statics reported](#) that "although STEM occupations made up 6.2 percent of national employment, they made up nearly 23 percent of employment in [the areas of] California-Lexington Park, Maryland. As a share of total employment, Southern Maryland had nearly 49 times as many aerospace engineers as the United States as a whole, as well as high concentrations of several other types of engineers and engineering technicians."

According to Patel, receiving the NSF S-STEM grant changed her life.

"It's helped me a lot to be able to say that I received an S-STEM scholarship," she explained. "It helped me to get into the colleges I wanted to attend after I graduated from CSM and it helped me to get the various internships I have had along the way. Also, the degree itself helped me develop my critical thinking skills which I applied to all of the other classes I took, and continue to take, to further my education."

Patel's younger sister Foram Patel and younger brother Parshva Patel are both currently enrolled at CSM and are also pursuing STEM degrees. However, Parita is proud to point out that she is the first female in her family to achieve a STEM degree.

"I had a great time at CSM," she said. "I think starting my academic career at CSM was the best decision I have ever made in my life."

Along with scholarship and support services for CMS students, grant monies will fund efforts that will increase enrollments through extensive K-16 STEM outreach in the region and improve student registration through advising and program pathways to encourage retention; increase student retention through community-building, bi-weekly cohort contact, mentoring, tutoring, research component, summer bridge program and enrichment experiences.

Students who qualify as academically talented, with demonstrated financial need and who have declared a STEM major, including programs in applied science and technology, biological sciences, computer information systems, computer science, engineering, engineering technology, information services technology, information systems, cybersecurity and physical sciences can apply for the S-STEM NSF grant. Students must also provide a one-page essay explaining why

they have chosen a STEM career major. NSF will distribute the funds to CSM Jan. 1, 2019 through Dec. 31, 2023. Visit <https://www.csmd.edu/apply-register/credit/scholars-programs/stem-scholars/> for more information.

The CSM Project Management Team responsible for securing the NSF S-STEM grant and managing it along with Poinsett include Professor of Biology Turner Coggins; Professor of Mathematics Susan Stickland; Professor of Biology Melanie Osterhouse; Financial Assistance Director/STEM Administrator Chris Zimmermann; Business, Technology and Public Service Division Chair and Professor Bernice Brezina; Assistant Professor in Science and Engineering Division and CSM Endowed Professor for Innovation John Short, Professor of Sociology/Research Dr. Maria Bryant, CSM Associate Vice President of Planning, Institutional Effectiveness and Research Dr. Kelly McMurray, Patuxent River Engineering Education Research Partnership Director David Barrett and Naval Surface Warfare Center Systems Integration Department Head John Hungerford. Poinsett also worked with former Grants Development Specialist Becky Cockerham on the project.

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