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(Neb.)-GPS And GIS Studies Included In Grant Applications At CSC

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 03/01/2013 07:58 AM

(Chadron)-Chadron State College faculty members are seeking five grants totaling over $250,000. The largest application, for $150,000, is intended to enhance students' experience using GPS and Geographic Information Systems. Employers expect job applicants to demonstrate a proficiency level with GPS/GIS that could be reached with a technologically strengthened rangeland and agricultural curriculum, according to Dr. Chuck Butterfield, professor and department chair of Applied Sciences.

In coordinating the writing of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant, Butterfield collaborated with several other regional and national experts. The grant addresses how, with further GPS/GIS knowledge, CSC students could better analyze and find solutions for real-world problems such as drought, crop and food distribution patterns, livestock and wildlife interactions, and related aspects of sustainable agricultural operations.

Chadron State's role in educating students who return to the family farm or ranch as well as entering careers in agriculture lending, seed and feed and other aspects of food production is emphasized in the grant. The USDA Forest Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission are among the employers and agencies expressing support for CSC within the grant.

The second largest grant submission, includes CSC's portion for $80,000 from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose is to assess Open Resource Education to determine the impact of OER upon student learning at CSC. Kim Thanos, founder and CEO of Lumen, an OER organization, prepared the grant application on behalf of CSC.

Dr. Charles Snare, vice president of academic affairs, said, "The hard-working and dedicated people at CSC have earned a reputation, partially through the Kaleidoscope project, for going the extra mile. We are responsive which brings about wonderful opportunities like this from our collaborators," he said.

If the grant is awarded, multiple institutions, including CSC, will be involved in analyzing student success in OER courses such as English Composition I and II. This arrangement results in what Snare describes as "big data" where trends and patterns of student success can be studied on a large enough scale to make predictions about the effectiveness of future OER courses.

Dr. Mike Leite, CSC professor of physical and Life Science plans to submit a sub-grant of $27,133 to the National Science Foundation for a project collaborating with two Nebraska universities, one Nebraska community college and Oglala Lakota College to enrich introductory geology courses by incorporating the latest research on inquiry-based learning. Creating new and modifying existing lab exercises, providing geology lab instructors with professional development training and assessing the impact of both are the main goals of the grant.

The Chadron State portion of an Educational Service Unit 16 grant application to assist K-12 teachers with professional development is $3,190.

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A CSC grant application to the American Political Science Association for $2,500, authored by Dr. Robert Knight, assistant professor in the Social and Communication Arts department, seeks to explain the lack of substantial structural and institutional reforms in Mexico since democratization.

—Tena L. Cook, Interim Marketing Coordinator

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