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FLCC awarded \$1.5M for research



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John Van Niel, FLCC professor of environmental conservation and horticulture, holds a mouse as he discusses field research with faculty from other community colleges at a workshop in Canandaigua in 2014. The FLCC-led workshops, held across the country, are funded by the National Science Foundation.



By Messenger Post

Posted Oct. 3, 2015 at 10:52 PM

HOPEWELL – The National Science Foundation has awarded Finger Lakes Community College a \$1.5 million grant to continue its work in developing undergraduate research programs in its classrooms and laboratories and at other community colleges across the country.

FLCC has previously received more \$4 million in National Science Foundation funding to develop a model for teaching basic science through research and to share that model with other community colleges.

"We believe that the best way to teach science is to do science. This new grant allows us to continue our work with 60 partner colleges in providing opportunities for community college students to engage in research," said James Hewlett of Webster, professor of biology at FLCC and director of the Community College Undergraduate Research Initiative (CCURI).

The four-year grant will enable FLCC to train faculty members at the college here and other colleges that want to launch their own research programs. The grants also will help fund travel expenses for students to present their work at conferences.



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At FLCC, all general biology classes are learning scientific principles and procedures though a project to record the biodiversity of insects in the region. Students gather insects, try to identify them, and verify the identification by checking each insect's DNA with an international database. They upload the location where each insect was found into the database, which more advanced biology students will use for analysis.

Other FLCC student research projects have involved tracking black bears and using DNA to identify male and female red-tailed hawks.

The NSF grants that have been awarded to FLCC represent a substantial investment from the federal government. The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology report, "Engage to Excel: Producing one million additional college graduates with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics," challenges U.S. colleges and universities to prepare one million more science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) college undergraduates over the next decade.

To meet this goal, the U.S. would need an additional 100,000 STEM graduates per year, requiring the nation's 1,132 community colleges to take an active role. The NSF awards provide the opportunity for FLCC to take a leadership position in this effort.

Hewlett, along with John Van Niel of Seneca Falls, FLCC professor of environmental conservation, started in 2008 with a \$500,000 grant for a pilot project, working with six other community colleges to revamp their biology programs to include research.

The success of the pilot led to a \$3.35 million grant and the establishment of CCURI in 2011. Since then, CCURI has developed a network of 60 partner community colleges, including Mesa Community College in Arizona, Ivy Technical Community College in Indiana, Oklahoma City Community College, Moreno Valley College in California, and Seminole State College in Florida.

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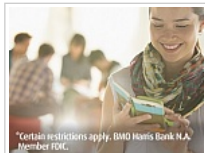
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