Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Partners with Universities of Iowa, South Florida to Create University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring

Six Additional Universities Named Programs of Exemplary Mentoring

(New York, NY) The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation announces that it will partner with University of Iowa and University of South Florida to create two University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring (UCEMs). Initiated through the Foundation’s Minority Ph.D. program, the new partnerships are designed to identify universities with a proven track record of successfully educating underrepresented minority graduate students in STEM disciplines and empower these universities to expand, strengthen, and institutionalize efforts aimed at minority recruitment, mentoring, educational support, and professional development. The Foundation also announces that it has designated six select graduate departments as Programs of Exemplary Mentoring (PEMS) and will support these departments in expanding their outreach to minority scholars.

University of Iowa and University of South Florida will each receive a three-year grant to create and operate their UCEMs, most of which will go directly to students for stipend support and professional development funds. Previous grants to create UCEMs were awarded in 2013 to Cornell University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Pennsylvania State University. Together the five UCEM awards total $4.7 million.

Selected through a competitive search, University of Iowa and University of South Florida were chosen based on a number of criteria, including their historical success in recruiting and mentoring graduate students from underrepresented minorities; the quality of the departments and programs constituting the UCEM; the quality, breadth, and creativity of their planned future activities; and the strength of their institutional commitment to furthering education for underrepresented minorities in the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

“The University of Iowa and the University of South Florida are developing creative, comprehensive, institution-wide programs to support minority students in STEM,” says Dr. Elizabeth S. Boylan, Program Director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “From the classroom, to the lab, to the Provost’s office, these institutions are creating environments where minority STEM students can not only succeed, but thrive.”
The creation of the University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring represents a change in the direction of the Sloan Foundation’s Minority Ph.D. program. Launched in 1995, the program initially focused on supporting underrepresented students at the individual mentor or department level, providing scholarships to students in over 60 graduate programs across the country. A year-long program-wide evaluation in 2012 led to a change in strategy. “After consulting with students, professors, educators, administrators, and program participants all across the country, we determined that we could leverage our funds if we concentrated our resources for student scholarship support on fewer institutions,” says Boylan, who oversaw the evaluation. “The most effective programs for educating students marshal resources from all levels of university faculty and administration and provide support at every step of a student’s career. That’s exactly what the University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring are expected to do.”

What follows are brief descriptions of some of the activities planned for the two new Centers.

**University of Iowa**

University of Iowa has committed to building a university-wide network of faculty committed to minority outreach and education, composed of 174 senior researchers across 22 STEM departments. With the ambitious goal of making minority scholars 10 percent of all STEM Ph.D. recipients by 2022, the faculty network will focus on preparing minority students for success in graduate programs, including assigning an engaged mentoring team to aid and counsel each student, a national initiative to create a feeder program by networking with similarly committed faculty at other schools, a speakers’ series, and a yearly community-building conference.

**University of South Florida**

Based out of its successful programs in the College of Marine Sciences and College of Engineering, the University of South Florida’s UCEM will be a unified, comprehensive, institutionally-integrated center devoted to mentoring minority STEM students. They plan to facilitate new professional development and leadership initiatives that will prepare minority doctoral students for successful transitions into academic, industry, government and non-traditional STEM careers after graduation. In addition to providing stipend support to 30 new minority doctoral students in engineering and oceanography, University of South Florida will host a number of enrichment activities, including an internal campaign to raise new funds for student support services, and a series of professional development seminars on topics like structuring summer research and scholarly writing.

In addition to the two UCEMs, the Foundation has also designated six additional university departments as Programs of Exemplary Mentoring (PEMs). Selected through a competitive submission process and awarded in recognition of exemplary commitment to recruiting and mentoring minority students, PEM grants provide university STEM programs with $60,000 to be
used for recruitment and educational support activities, including funds for campus visits; graduate fairs; minority-focused tutorials, workshops, and seminars; and funds for professional travel. The six new PEM departments and collaboratives join four others named in summer 2014. The PEMs now include:

- **Arizona State University**, Mathematical, Computational, and Modeling Sciences Center
- **Michigan State University**, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- **Purdue University**, Chemistry
- **Texas A&M University**, Agriculture and Life Sciences
- **University of Arizona**, Optical Sciences
- **University of Maryland, College Park**, Engineering
- **University of Michigan**, Applied Physics
- **University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez**, Chemical Engineering and Chemistry
- **University of Texas, Austin**, Chemistry
- **University of Texas, San Antonio**, Biology, Chemistry and Physics

“Our PEM grants recognize the extraordinary work graduate programs are doing mentoring and educating minority STEM students across the country,” says Elizabeth S. Boylan. “They are campus leaders that are demonstrating the creative, innovative role faculty can play in making sure minority graduate students succeed. The Sloan Foundation is honored to support the continuation and expansion of their efforts.”

In total, the five UCEMs and ten PEMs represent a multi-year $5.3 million investment by the Sloan Foundation in institutional initiatives to support underrepresented minorities in STEM disciplines.

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The **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation** is a philanthropic, not-for-profit grantmaking institution based in New York City. Established in 1934 by Alfred Pritchard Sloan Jr., then-President and Chief Executive Officer of General Motors, the Foundation makes grants in support of original research and education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and economic performance. This grant was made through the Foundation’s STEM Higher Education Program Area, which aims to increase the quality and diversity of higher education in STEM fields.

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