SLCC Using Shared NSF Grant to Create Engineering Career Pipeline for Young Students

SLCC and Jordan School District will use grant to extend and enhance the district's Pre-Engineering Program and connect it with the college's Engineering Technology Program.

SALT LAKE CITY (PRWEB) July 14, 2020 -- Salt Lake Community College’s (SLCC) School of Math, Science and Engineering and the Jordan School District’s (JSD) Pre-Engineering Program (PREP) received a $589,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that will be used to extend and enhance the current PREP program and then create a direct connection between JSD’s PREP program and SLCC’s Engineering Technology (ET) Program.

The multi-year grant will also increase access and success for SLCC ET students, improve graduation rates for students of color and women, and engage JSD middle school students in intensive, year-round experiences in engineering technology. This will allow a completely new approach for how SLCC delivers college credits in the ET program while creating a career pipeline in ET for younger students.

“One of our greatest challenges has been to recruit students into engineering programs that are essential to Utah’s continued economic development,” said Craig Caldwell, dean of SLCC’s School of Science, Mathematics and Engineering. “This new grant from the National Science Foundation will directly contribute to our ability to connect these students to high quality educational programs at SLCC and provide an accelerated pathway that places students in high wage jobs in engineering fields.”

The modified PREP program consists of two parts. For students in the 7th through 9th grades, the program offers consistent contact, encouragement, and experiences to foster their interest in engineering through bridge activities at SLCC’s Westpointe campus. The second part of the program, under the grant known as “PREP Plus,” adds a completely new fourth year to the program for students in the 10th grade with enhanced contact and activity within SLCC engineering.

The culmination of the grant is to allow these students as 11th and 12th graders to dual enroll at SLCC to earn a newly created SLCC ET certificate of completion as they complete high school. A number of these courses will be in a Competency Based Education (CBE) format, allowing students to progress at their own pace and accomplish academic goals consistent with the traditional ET courses. Students will also receive focused career and academic advising. Upon graduation, students will have a clear choice forward into jobs within the manufacturing workforce, to complete their two-year degree in ET at SLCC, or to jump with a significant head start into other engineering pathways.

“This NSF grant will allow the college to retool curriculum in our ET program and deliver this content to students as they finish up the extended PREP program also made possible by this funding,” said Jonathan Barnes, associate dean for the Division of Natural Sciences and Engineering at SLCC. “As PREP allows students to act on their interests in engineering early, we can deepen SLCC’s reach and provide more ways for our students to fill critical local needs in fabrication and manufacturing.”

Salt Lake Community College is Utah’s largest open-access college, educating and training the state’s most diverse student body in 8 areas of study at 12 locations and online. The majority of SLCC graduates transfer to four-year institutions, and thousands contribute to Utah’s vibrant economy by moving directly into the
workforce.

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