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10-2013

Arkansas Catalyst, October 2013

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Citation

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. (2013). Arkansas Catalyst, October 2013. *Arkansas Catalyst*. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/arkansas-catalyst/13>

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University Shares in \$32 Million Federal Research Grant



Brent T. Williams

The U.S. Department of Education awarded a \$32 million, five-year grant to the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Department of Education to fund a program aimed at improving the education and career outcomes of low-income Arkansas teenagers with disabilities.

The federal research grant is the largest the university has received since 1988 and is believed to be the largest in the institution's 142-year history.

The federal program is aimed at youths who receive Supplemental Security Income. It is known as PROMISE, an acronym for "Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income." Brent T. Williams, associate professor of rehabilitation education and research at the university, is the principal investigator of the PROMISE grant and will oversee the project.

"Most of us in the competitive workplace had a first entry-level job or internship at the beginning of our work lives," Williams said. "That experience, good or bad, was instrumental in our later workplace success. Adolescents who receive Social Security disability benefits typically do not have a first job or internship experience. As such, they remain cut off from the world of work. The PROMISE grant seeks to provide 1,000 adolescents with disabilities who receive Social Security disability benefits with their first paid work experience."

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Award Creates Maritime Transport Research Center



Heather Nachtmann

Transportation researchers at the University of Arkansas will receive \$1.4 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation to create the Maritime Transportation Research and Education Center.

The funds will augment transportation research at the university and will address the

Transportation Department's strategic goal of economic competitiveness through efficient, resilient and sustainable transportation systems on U.S. navigable waterways.

The center, also called MarTREC, will function as a consortium of researchers at the University of Arkansas, Jackson State University, Louisiana State University and the University of New Orleans, all of which have proximity to navigable waterways along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast.

The \$1.4 million grant will be matched by \$750,000 from a combination of sources, including each of the four institutions, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and in-kind and cash support from private industry, said Heather Nachtmann, professor of industrial engineering and principal investigator for the grant.

"Our vision is to be recognized as the nation's premier source for expertise on maritime and multimodal transportation research and education," said Nachtmann, who will serve as the center's director.

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GRANT AWARD WINNERS

The following is a sampling of grants awarded to faculty in September, with the principal investigator, the award amount and the sponsor. An asterisk (*) indicates the continuation of a previous award.

- Sha Jin, \$432,859, National Science Foundation
- Woodrow L. Shew, \$361,347, National Science Foundation
- Susanne Striegler, \$360,000, National Science Foundation

RazorGrant Training Focuses on SURF

- Christophe Bobda,
\$357,786, National Science
Foundation
- Jia Di, \$250,000, NASA

The office of research and sponsored programs (RSSP) requires Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) mentors to enter information into a new electronic routing and approval system called RazorGrant. This system replaces the paper format of the RSSP Proposal Routing Form.

For those not familiar with the new system, RSSP will be offering RazorGrant Training exclusively for SURF faculty mentors on Oct. 16 and 17. To sign up, go this link.

The office also encourages faculty mentors to attend one of the training sessions if they have questions regarding the budget for mentor costs. Kathy Scheibel, interim director of RSSP, will attend both sessions to help answer questions.

[Sign up today](#) 

SEC Symposium Set for 2014

The second annual Southeastern Conference Symposium, entitled "Prevention of Obesity: Overcoming a 21st Century Public Health Challenge," is scheduled for September 21-23, 2014 in Atlanta.

The SEC Symposium is a cornerstone program of SECU, the Southeastern Conference's academic initiative, through which the SEC sponsors, supports and promotes collaborative higher education programs and activities involving administrators, faculty and students.

The symposium is a showcase for the academic excellence of the conference's member institutions and underscores their educational and economic contributions to the vitality of the region, nation and world.

For more information about the symposium, go to www.SECSymposium.com in the coming months to get the latest updates on speakers, session topics, registration and more.

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University of Arkansas Arkansas Newswire

University, State Education Department Awarded \$32 Million Grant

Funds geared to help young Arkansans with disabilities

Thursday, October 03, 2013

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a \$32 million, five-year grant to the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Department of Education to fund a program aimed at improving the education and career outcomes of low-income Arkansas teenagers with disabilities.

The federal research grant is the largest the university has received in its history.

The federal program is aimed at youths who receive Supplemental Security Income. It is known as PROMISE, an acronym for “Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income.” Brent T. Williams, associate professor of rehabilitation education and research at the University of Arkansas, is the principal investigator of the PROMISE grant and will oversee the project.



Brent T. Williams

University of Arkansas Chancellor G. David Gearhart congratulated the college and state agencies for their collaboration on the research project.

“This grant will give us a significant boost in our goal of becoming a top 50 public research institution,” Gearhart said. “This is a wonderful example of a land-grant institution working with other groups to serve the people of Arkansas.”

Tom Kimbrell, Arkansas commissioner of education, said, “We are pleased to be a partner in this effort to provide much-needed services to low-income Arkansas youth who have disabilities. The funds will help these Arkansans find meaningful education and career opportunities that will aid them in becoming self-sufficient in today’s economy.”

A total of 2,000 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 16 who receive SSI will be recruited for the project. The youth will be divided into two groups, with half receiving the intervention of job coaching and benefits counseling, and the other half serving as a control group that does not receive the intervention.

University researchers will gather data on the participants over the course of the five years. Tom Smith, dean of the College of Education and Health Professions, said the focus of the project will be to develop a model program to assist adolescents with disabilities to become independent adults.

“We are extremely excited to work with the Arkansas Department of Education, Gov. Mike Beebe’s office and numerous state agencies on this project,” Smith said.

The PROMISE program is a joint initiative of four federal agencies: the departments of education, health and human services, labor and the Social Security Administration. Its underlying premise is that improved coordination between services can improve outcomes for youth and their families. Its goals also include decreasing reliance on SSI and reducing the cost to the federal government. The grant was submitted through a partnership between the university, the Arkansas Department of Education and other state agencies.

“Most of us in the competitive workplace had a first entry-level job or internship at the beginning of our work lives,” Williams said. “That experience, good or bad, was instrumental in our later workplace success. Adolescents who receive Social Security disability benefits typically do not have a first job or internship experience. As such, they remain cut off from the world of work. The PROMISE grant seeks to provide 1,000 adolescents with disabilities who receive Social Security disability benefits with their first paid work experience.”

The PROMISE grant is the first national study to investigate the strength of the possible correlation between initial paid work experiences and later competitive employment, Williams said. Poverty and disability perpetuate a cycle that further isolates and marginalizes people with disabilities from low-income families, he said. Fewer than one in 10 adolescents with disabilities who receive SSI ever achieve competitive employment, he said.

“The findings from this research could go a long way toward facilitating the independence

and societal inclusion of adolescents with disabilities while reducing the financial encumbrance of the Social Security Administration,” Williams said. “This would benefit not only Arkansas, but the nation as a whole, now and for years to come.”

Carri George and Karan Burnette, employees of two other units administratively based in the College of Education and Health Professions, wrote the grant proposal assisted by Williams. George is a research associate with the Center for the Utilization of Rehabilitation Resources for Education, Networking, Training and Service in Hot Springs, and Burnette is associate director of Partners for Inclusive Communities in North Little Rock.

An employee of the Arkansas Department of Education will serve as a liaison coordinating the participation of public school personnel.

Arkansas was one of five individual states that received funding. The other four were California, Maryland, New York and Wisconsin. A consortium of six states – Utah, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Colorado and Arizona – also received funding.

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University of Arkansas Arkansas Newswire

Researchers Receive \$1.4 Million from U.S. Department of Transportation

Research focuses on transportation systems on navigable waterways

Friday, September 27, 2013

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – Transportation researchers at the University of Arkansas will receive \$1.4 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation to create the Maritime Transportation Research and Education Center.

The funds, announced Tuesday by U.S. Sens. Mark Pryor and John Boozman and Rep. Steve Womack — all of Arkansas — will augment transportation research at the university and will address the Transportation Department's strategic goal of economic competitiveness through efficient, resilient and sustainable transportation systems on U.S. navigable waterways.

The center, also called MarTREC, will function as a consortium of researchers at the University of Arkansas – the grantee institution – Jackson State University, Louisiana State University and the University of New Orleans, all of which have proximity to navigable waterways along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast.

The \$1.4 million grant will be matched by \$750,000 from a combination of sources, including each of the four institutions, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and in-kind and cash support from private industry, said Heather



Heather Nachtmann, University of Arkansas.

Nachtmann, professor of industrial engineering and principal investigator for the grant.



MarTREC, a consortium of researchers at four universities, will address the U.S. Department of Transportation's strategic goal of economic competitiveness through efficient, resilient and sustainable transportation systems on U.S. navigable waterways.

construction of resilient and sustainable multimodal infrastructure, and the creation and promotion of livable coastal and river-valley communities with effective emergency management systems. Multimodal transportation systems include trucking, air, rail and barge.

Focusing on logistics, the researchers will design sustainable multimodal supply chain networks to optimize resource allocation and minimize congestion. Nachtmann said these networks seek to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of transportation logistics by focusing attention on shipping cycles, reliability, safety and environmental impact. Other studies will provide reliable and accurate information about the economic impact of the nation's intra-coastal waterway transportation systems under both normal and disruptive conditions.

Researchers will develop improved materials to enhance the resilience and longevity of transportation infrastructure. Part of this effort will include developing technology to monitor the structural health and safety of critical facilities and structures.

Other researchers will develop tools to evaluate the social, economic and environmental consequences of these transportation systems on river-valley and coastal communities. They will plan for enhanced social equity, mobility and accessibility by integrating smart growth concepts. Finally, the researchers will investigate the use of these transportation systems to facilitate the movement of large groups of people during emergency evacuations.

The overall program will include workforce development and maritime and multimodal job training, Nachtmann said. The program will also promote transportation workforce

“Our vision is to be recognized as the nation’s premier source for expertise on maritime and multimodal transportation research and education,” said Nachtmann, who will serve as the center’s director. “The consortium was formed based on nationally-renowned expertise at these institutions. Being strategically located along major navigable rivers and coastal areas, we have supported the MarTREC theme of economic competitiveness, and we are dedicated to practical research that will transfer to workforce development.”

Nachtmann said the research program will focus on specific problems within three general categories – maritime and multimodal logistics management,

diversity through outreach programs in public schools.

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