Dear Colleagues,

A postsecondary education is one of the most important investments students and families can make in their own future.

Today, the U.S. Department of Education announced the 2015, First in the World (FITW) grant competition, an evidence-based grant program in higher education designed to support the development and testing of innovative approaches and strategies to improve postsecondary attainment. This year, FITW will award $60 million in grants, including a $16 million set-aside for minority-serving institutions.

FITW is a key part of President Obama’s Higher Education agenda focused on increasing access, affordability, and outcomes of a postsecondary education.

Listed below are the series of pre-application webinars the Office of Postsecondary Education will host:

**Webinar: FITW—Development Grants**  
Date: May 14, 2015  
Time: 3:00pm, EST

**Webinar: FITW—Validation Grants**  
Date: May 15, 2015  
Time: 3:00pm, EST

**Webinar: FITW—Evidence & Evaluation Requirements**  
Date: May 19, 2015  
Time: 3:00pm, EST

If you would like to sign up and/or learn more about FITW, please visit the First in the World, Application Information page on the Office of Postsecondary Education’s website. Feel free to also check out today’s blog on FITW from Under Secretary, Mitchell.

**Applications will be accepted from May 11th, 2015 – June 26, 2015.**

We appreciate your support in sharing this opportunity widely with your networks, members and affiliates.

Thank you,

The Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education Announces $60 Million Available for First in the World Grant Competition

With two years of grants, the Department will have invested $135 million in higher education innovation through FITW.

MAY 8, 2015   Contact:  Press Office, (202) 401-1576, press@ed.gov

As part of the Obama Administration's commitment to drive innovations in higher education and increase college completion, affordability and quality outcomes, the U.S. Department of Education today announced the availability of $60 million in Fiscal Year 2015 in the First in the World (FITW) program. Click here for the Federal Register notice for applications. FITW grants will fund the development and testing of innovative approaches and strategies to improve postsecondary education attainment. Of the $60 million available this year, the competition has a set-aside of $16 million for institutions designated as minority-serving institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

"Through the First in the World program, the Obama Administration is calling on colleges and universities to help develop the most promising approaches to improve outcomes for students, particularly for those who are underrepresented, underprepared or from low income backgrounds," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "We look forward to hearing from institutions as they seek to pioneer new and innovative ways to increase college success."

Encouraging and expanding innovation in higher education is a key element in helping more students complete college and reaching the President's goal to once again lead the world in college attainment. FITW is a key part of ensuring more Americans have the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of a growing global economy and builds on the Obama Administration's historic investments in college affordability, including increasing the maximum Pell grant award by over $1,000 and creating the $2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit. It underscores the importance of new efforts to ensure college opportunity, including the President's new proposal to make two years of college free for responsible students, letting students earn the first half of a bachelor's degree and the skills needed in the workforce at no cost.

That is why the Administration started the First in the World Program, which provides grants to colleges and universities to test new approaches to fostering success among disadvantaged students. The goals of the grant program are to improve student outcomes today and to build a stronger evidence base of what works so that all colleges and universities can better shape their programs. The first $75 million in grants were awarded in 2014 to 24 colleges and universities. The President has proposed increasing First in the World to $200 million in Fiscal Year 2016. This and other key investments are possible only because the President's Budget reverses the harmful effects of sequestration, providing resources for the investments we need to strengthen the economy and expand opportunity.

FITW is an evidence-based program that draws on the design of the Department's Investing in Innovation Fund (i3). This year's FITW competition will feature two types of grants—development grants focused on testing innovative practices associated with student success; and validation grants with more rigorous evidence criteria, intended to confirm the effectiveness of promising practices when implemented more broadly. Successful applicants must demonstrate not only an innovative project design, but outline a rigorous plan for how the project will be evaluated to demonstrate its effectiveness.

The deadline for applications is June 26, 2015. All grants will be awarded no later than September 30, 2015. For additional information, visit http://www2.ed.gov/programs/fitw.