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K-State using federal grant to help bolster bilingual learning, teaching in Dodge City

Kansas State University and its partners in **Dodge City** will use a \$2.9 million grant to strengthen bilingual education for students at every level in the community.

Project RESPETAME — Reimagining Educational Systems by Practicing Equity and Translanguaging and Accessing Multiliterate Experiences — is a National Professional Development grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition. Partners include Dodge City Community College and Dodge City Public Schools.

Socorro Herrera, executive director of the Center for Intercultural and Multilingual Advocacy, said the project is designed to support systemic change for emergent bilingual learners and their peers. The grant provides professional development opportunities for pre-K, elementary and secondary teachers, as well as support for 20 bilingual students majoring in elementary education.

Herrera, a professor of curriculum and instruction at K-State's College of Education, is the internationally recognized expert on biography-driven, culturally responsive teaching and primary investigator on the grant. She collaborates with districts to support teacher capacity building and effective partnerships with families and communities.

Debbie Mercer, dean of the College of Education, believes Project RESPETAME will position the Dodge City education system for the future.

"The power of this grant lies in the longstanding and collaborative nature of the relationship between educators in Dodge City and the K-State College of Education," Mercer said. "This grant is somewhat unique in that it is addressing both the immediate needs of the community's bilingual learners and the district's effort to attract more bilingual teachers of color to Dodge City classrooms."

Through Project RESPETAME, pre-K-12 educators will develop increased capacities to foster language and biliteracy/multiliteracy development. Herrera said teachers will receive site-based professional development on culturally responsive practices that maximize the sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive and academic assets of learners and their families. In addition, secondary educators will complete coursework leading to an endorsement in English to speakers of other languages.

Diana Mendoza, Dodge City Public Schools director of English to speakers of other languages and diversity, described the grant as an opportunity to enhance the district's current initiatives and continue building the bridge between core instruction, strategies for teaching English to speakers of other languages, and family engagement.

"The goals of the grant will serve as conduits for providing teachers and staff with the support needed to address the diverse needs of our school community," Mendoza said.

Project RESPETAME also creates an innovative teacher preparation pathway for bilingual students of

color who want to remain in Dodge City while earning their bachelor's degree and teach in USD 443 schools. The students will maximize dual credit opportunities in high school before transitioning to Dodge City Community College and then complete their bachelor's degree online through K-State's College of Education.

This program will incorporate youth participatory action research and specialized seminars, advising and field experiences to facilitate the developing teachers' understanding of self, learners and their local community. Upon completion of their degrees, the students will be ready to serve local schools and the next generation of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

"We are excited about this fantastic opportunity to develop our pipeline of diverse and talented educators," said Martha Mendoza, principal of Dodge City High School. "This grant will allow us to invest in our current teachers and grow our own future teachers by supporting our high school students interested in becoming educators in Dodge City. As an English language learner, I know firsthand the impact teachers had on me when they valued my assets and knew how to support my needs. I am thrilled that this project will provide our district with new opportunities to enhance teachers' capacities for culturally responsive teaching."

K-State Salina selected for 2023 Leadership Transformation Grant through Kansas Leadership Center

Kansas State University Salina Aerospace and Technology Campus is one of 87 organizations across Kansas to be selected for the 2023 Leadership Transformation Grant.

The competitive grant, through the Kansas Leadership Center, will help K-State Salina continue cultivating a culture that embraces change, tackles problems and seizes opportunities. As part of the Leadership Transformation Grant, K-State Salina has been awarded 60 spots, meaning that faculty and staff can partake in the training, regardless of position or title. K-State Salina's mission starts with the development of leadership and this grant is one way the campus is investing in its faculty, staff and students to keep developing leadership capacity.

This is the second year in a row that the K-State Salina campus has been selected for the Leadership Transformation Grant, as the campus provided 40 participants training in 2022.

"K-State Salina is eager to continue our partnership with the Kansas Leadership Center," said Kirsten Zoller, executive director of strategic initiatives at K-State Salina. "The Kansas Leadership Center principle of 'Leadership is not an authority position, but rather an activity' is a value that our campus has adopted to empower our employees so we can continue to improve our organizational and communication skills day by day."

In addition to the 60 spots for training, the campus core team will lead additional programming and learning opportunities that amplify the Kansas Leadership Center's dynamic program experiences. The grant additionally comes with further resources and consultation from the organization.

The Kansas Leadership Center is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering leadership for strong, healthier and more prosperous Kansas communities.



K-State scientists receive collaborative grant to advance biofuel production and agricultural economy



Kansas State celebrates success of Kansas City community visit

President Richard Linton and several Connected 'Cats students led a Kansas State University team of faculty, staff and extension professionals who visited

Kansas State University researchers are part of a five-year collaborative grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to improve oilseed crops for use as biofuels and other bioproducts.

Timothy Durrett, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biophysics, and Ruth Welti, university distinguished professor of biology, received nearly \$1.9 million to better understand how changing the biochemistry of oilseed plants alters their oil production.

The research group is working with camelina and pennycress — non-food oilseed crops — that can be used as cover crops by farmers. Durrett says these plants have not benefited from the breeding that has increased yield in other crops. This research will help scientists better understand how the plants synthesize fatty acids to make lipids while also improving oil production and crop profitability.

As part of the collaboration, Durrett is working to more efficiently produce transgenic plants. Current research methods alter the biochemistry of plants at random places within their DNA and Durrett hopes to make the genetic engineering process more predictable and efficient.

"We will implement cutting-edge plant synthetic biology," Durrett said. "If we can insert the genetic changes in the same spot every time, it makes testing the effect that much easier. By understanding fundamental plant biochemical concepts, we can then apply these to other plant species as well."

"In my lab, I can get a snapshot of how the plants are responding to changes that are being introduced genetically," Welti said. "This project will really help scientists understand the overall principles and rules of fatty acid and oil production in oilseed plants."

The researchers stressed that camelina and pennycress can be integrated into a traditional rotation and do not interfere with food production.

"If we are making biofuels or bioproducts, we don't want to compete with food production," Durrett said. "A cover crop by itself it will protect the soil from wind and runoff, but with these oilseed crops farmers also earn additional income."

The project's principal investigator is Edgar Cahoon, the George W. Holmes professor of biochemistry at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. The project team also includes researchers from University of Colorado, Boulder, Washington State University, Montana State University, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri and the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center.

the Greater Kansas City area on Nov. 1 and 2. The events in Johnson County and Wyandotte County were part of the presidential community visit initiative.

The next K-State community visit will be Monday, Dec. 5, in the Central Kansas and Salina area.

The Nov. 1 and 2 Greater Kansas City area community engaged hundreds of community members throughout the day in events that highlighted community partnerships and K-State Research and Extension relationships.

Linton and the K-State team participated in an open forum as well as conversations surrounding important topics for the Greater Kansas City area community, including urban food systems, postsecondary access and equity, industry needs in the region and food insecurity. The K-State team also volunteered with Harvesters Community Food Network as part of a service project to address food insecurity in the Greater Kansas City community.

Two Calling all 'Cats recruitment events occurred in the evenings — one event focused on Wyandotte County and another event focused on Johnson County.

For the Connected 'Cats student event leaders for the Greater Kansas City area community visit, it was an opportunity to share their K-State stories with their hometown communities.

"I enjoyed myself thoroughly," said Malik Jenkins, senior in life science and pre-veterinary medicine, Kansas City, Kansas. "It was an amazing opportunity to have fruitful conversation from students and community leaders, which created a comfortable atmosphere to listen and learn and equally be heard and celebrated."

"I enjoyed the Kansas City community visit as it was especially impactful to see my hometown community and university community come together to listen to each other and work to approach shared challenges together," said Stacia Mendoza, senior in finance, Lenexa.

"The Greater Kansas City visit was a great experience for me. I loved being able to connect with my community and learn about how Kansas State University can better support them," said Camden Mayfield, senior in mechanical engineering, Overland Park. "I will say that being able to speak with prospective students about coming to K-State and all the opportunities that await them was my favorite part of the whole visit."

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