Science Foundation Arizona Awarded More Than $2.5M in Grants to Help Community Colleges
Local nonprofit receives two grants from National Science Foundation to help local rural and national colleges

PHOENIX (Sept. 30, 2014) – Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) announced that the organization has been awarded a total of $2.625 million in grants from National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant funding will assist rural Arizona community colleges and Hispanic-serving colleges throughout the nation to expand their workforce pipelines.

SFAz received a four-year, $1.8 million grant for its Hispanic-Serving Community College (HSCC) KickStarter Program. The HSCC KickStarter program is a national effort to reach out to HSCCs with limited federal grant writing experience. The program will provide the HSCCs with technical assistance to improve their readiness and competitiveness for federal grant programs focused on student recruitment and retention STEM fields.

This program leverages the assets developed at SFAz, including four key areas:
1. Access to HSCCs through SFAz’s competitive review process
2. Best Practices identified by the STEM Pathways Program and disseminated through the STEM Pathways Guide
3. Integration with the Arizona STEM Network’s online community forum and database
4. The expertise of SFAz’s field representatives to assist HSCCs with their STEM Pathways development

Trivium Consulting, located in Washington, D.C. and a partner of SFAz, will assist the HSCCs with grant writing to allow them the opportunity to benefit from the KickStarter Program.

NSF also awarded SFAz with an Advanced Technological Education grant for their program, SFAz+8, to build capacity for STEM Pathways in rural Arizona. This three-year, $825,000 grant leverages the collective commitment of Arizona’s eight rural community colleges to establish a Rural Community College STEM Network and enhance institutional partnering, program replication and accelerated delivery of STEM Pathways. The eight community colleges participating in SFAz+8 include: Arizona Western College, Central Arizona College, Cochise College, Coconino Community College, Eastern Arizona College, Mohave Community College, Northland Pioneer College and Yavapai College.

“Students can obtain a certification, two or four year degree with STEM Pathways,” said William Harris, president and CEO of SFAz. “Students can explore, prepare for and pursue STEM degrees and careers within the program.”

With the new NSF-funded SFAz+8 grant award, SFAz will collaborate with rural community colleges across Arizona to adopt components of the STEM Pathways into their communities with the end goal to increase the pipeline of rural students pursuing STEM degrees and credentials to meet local and regional workforce needs.
The SFAz STEM Pathways program was built upon the Engineering Pathway model developed at Cochise College with prior funding from SFAz and NSF. The program includes an online STEM Pathways Guide that provides schools with an easy-to-use roadmap for researching, planning and implementing the program.

Students are offered multiple opportunities to explore, prepare for and pursue STEM degrees and careers within STEM Pathways. Pathway programs are led and driven by community colleges that function as conduits between high schools, universities and jobs. The community college-led Pathways programs include outreach to K-12 students, technology-driven academic curriculum that lead students to industry-recognized credentials, and early college options for high school students who earn transferable credits toward certifications and degrees leading to jobs.

All programs must be integrated with industries that keep the programs current, offer students real world experiences through outreach programs and internships, and give hiring preferences to students with industry-recognized credentials.