Science Foundation Arizona Draws More than 350 Educators from 13 Arizona Counties to 3rd Annual Arizona STEM Clubs Conference

TEMPE (June 9, 2015) – Just a week after most Arizona schools closed for summer break, more than 350 dedicated educators from 13 of Arizona’s 15 counties traveled to Tempe yesterday to attend the 3rd Annual Arizona STEM Clubs Conference to learn how they could improve their students’ achievements and better prepare them for college and careers through establishment of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) clubs at their schools.

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) and Arizona State University hosted the conference for teachers and administrators to learn how to establish STEM clubs, apply for seed funding for STEM clubs, and attend breakout sessions on topics such as project-based learning, increasing STEM interest among girls and minorities, and STEM and the arts. The Helios Education Foundation, State Farm Insurance, Wells Fargo, IDT and the Herbert H. and Barbara C. Dow Foundation generously sponsored the event. Attendance at the annual Arizona STEM Club Conference has grown from 120 the first year to more than 350 this year.

SFAz began supporting STEM clubs in 2012, defining a STEM club as “any gathering of students that meets regularly in an informal environment to work on inquiry-based STEM related activities.” The clubs were piloted in 11 schools in four school districts. There are now more than 200 SFAz-supported STEM clubs in more than 150 schools across Arizona, directly impacting more than 2,000 students this past year.

An SFAz study has shown that students participating in these clubs had higher pass rates for the 2014 AIMS math and science tests in comparison to the state average in all grades. Interest and confidence in STEM studies were also found to be higher in students attending STEM clubs, as compared to their peers in control groups who did not participate.

“The STEM Club Conference provides an amazing array of resources for teachers to integrate STEM into both after school programs and the classroom. Teachers travel to this event from all over the state to gain practical knowledge, connect to business and industry, and apply for seed funding for clubs at their schools”, said SFAz Director of Education Linda Coyle. “This year’s event highlighted the connections being made between K-12 education, the community, and business and industry. It’s truly inspirational to see how committed the teachers are to helping students reach their highest potential while evolving their interest and motivation into STEM careers.”
The popularity and effectiveness of STEM clubs continues to grow rapidly, initiated and supported by SFAz’s development of the SFAz STEM Club Model and STEM Club Guide, a free resource available online allowing educators anywhere in Arizona, or across the nation, to replicate the SFAz STEM Club Model in their schools. The annual conference has become a popular addition to the array of resources SFAz provides educators.

During this year’s conference, attendees with already established STEM clubs showcased products and activities ranging from robotics to a STEM-based drama club, STEM gardening, and distance learning activities. STEM club facilitators also shared with fellow educators operational models, best practices, and the benefits and challenges to starting a new club.

During each conference, educators can apply for seed funding to establish new STEM clubs in their schools. To date, SFAz has seeded nearly 200 clubs. Successful applicants for 2015 funding will be announced this summer.

For more information about the SFAz STEM Club Model, Guide, and sponsorship opportunities, contact sfrimer@sfaz.org, visit www.sfaz.org/stem or call (602) 682-2800.

About Science Foundation Arizona

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty in conjunction with the executive and legislative branches of State government. SFAz serves as a catalyst for high-wage, knowledge-based jobs and economic diversity through administration and strict oversight of research, development and education grants to public education and other non-profit research performing institutions. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org and like us on Facebook.

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