

DSU Receives \$200,000 NOAA Grant to Develop Environmental Scientists

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Delaware State University has been awarded a one-year \$208,000 grant to be a part of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) effort to meet the federal agency's workforce needs in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that support NOAA's mission.

DSU has received the grant as part of its partnership with Florida A&M University (FAMU), which is serving as the lead agency in allocation of a \$15 million education and research grant among nine universities and environmental entities. The grant will provide funds to support students as they pursue NOAA-relevant education, research, and training in environmental science. This grant supports enhancing environmental literacy from K-12 to the doctorate level.



Dr. Christopher Heckscher, assistant professor of natural resources, is the principal investigator for the DSU portion of the NOAA grant.

Dr. Christopher Heckscher, assistant professor of natural resources and the principal investigator of the DSU portion of the grant, said that funding will enable the university to further engage underrepresented students in the field of environmental research.

"The funding will assist us in training students in the environmental sciences so that they graduate from DSU competitive with other graduates for jobs in the environmental sciences including policy, climate change, sea level rise, ecosystem processes, and other environmental focal areas," Dr. Heckscher said. "With this funding, we will be able hire graduate students to study environmental problems in the Delaware estuary.

Dr. Heckscher said if the federal funding continues to be available, the allocation could be continued annually over the next five years.

In addition to DSU, funding also went to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Jackson State University, University of Texas at Brownsville, and Creighton University as well as three National Estuarine Research Reserves; Flower Garden Banks National

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Marine Sanctuary; the Gulf of Mexico Alliance; and, the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System.

The award will support the NOAA Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC). FAMU (the lead institution) and its partners will focus on the following goals:

§ Increasing the number of well-trained and highly qualified scientists and managers, particularly from under-represented minority groups entering the NOAA workforce and other resource management entities;

§ Improving the scientific bases for coastal resource management and to develop tools and research products to characterize, evaluate, and forecast coastal and marine ecosystem responses to natural and human induced stressors; and,

§ Facilitating community engagement related to the function and relevance of coastal ecosystems and the services they provide to society.

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