



Fall 8-16-2010

## Winthrop Awarded \$1.2 Million Grant to Help Train Math and Science Teachers

Winthrop University

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### Recommended Citation

Winthrop University, "Winthrop Awarded \$1.2 Million Grant to Help Train Math and Science Teachers" (2010). *Winthrop News 2010*. 112.  
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08/16/2010

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# Winthrop Awarded \$1.2 Million Grant to Help Train Math and Science Teachers

## Quick Facts

- Winthrop will undergo a new initiative with a \$1.2 million National Science Foundation grant to train teachers for high needs areas.
- The Winthrop Initiative for STEM Educators (WISE) will award 34 potential math and science educators \$10,000 a year each for two years.



Beth Costner

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The scramble to recruit and retain highly effective math and science teachers should not be a matter of luck for area public schools. Yet school officials have horror stories.

To begin a more deliberate and successful process, Winthrop University will undergo a new initiative with a \$1.2 million [National Science Foundation](#) grant to train teachers for high needs areas. The **Winthrop Initiative for STEM Educators** (WISE) will award 34 potential math and science educators \$10,000 a year each for two years.

Through a new **Robert Noyce Scholarship Program**, the five-year WISE grant will engage teacher candidates at Winthrop and transfer students from York Technical College, with support from the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) and seven high-need districts. The school districts are Rock Hill and York and the counties of Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster and Union.

"Not only do schools need qualified teachers, they need effective teachers who can inspire students to think, to engage and to develop into future mathematicians and scientists," said **Beth Costner**, chair of Winthrop's [Department of Mathematics](#) and one of the grant proposal writers.

The initiative will use strategies for mentor teacher training, yearlong internships in high-need districts, professional development schools and multi-year teacher induction programs for new teachers to develop scholars with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to teach successfully in high need schools.

Over the past few years, national efforts to fill high-need teaching jobs have produced mixed results. About 20% of the STEM hires statewide between 2004 and 2009 had alternative or emergency certifications, plus these teachers are twice as likely to leave teaching as those with regular certification.

One WISE partner recalled that a high school math class in her district had four different teachers in one year: *"We hired a math teacher whose last teaching experience was in 1967. She left over the Labor Day weekend and was replaced by a long-term sub with no classroom management skills; she was dismissed after a short trial period. Next was a sub just finishing her degree in math education; she had to leave to finish her last semester of school. Luckily, a certified middle school math teacher was hired. She was the fourth teacher that these students had in one year. Thankfully, she is still with the district."*

The **WISE leadership team** will include **Costner**; **Lisa Johnson**, senior associate to the dean of education; **Cassie Bell**, a biology instructor; and **Kelly Costner**, an assistant professor in education. Additional faculty members in math, biology, chemistry and education will assist with the grant. The WISE grant represents another collaboration between the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) and

the [Richard W. Riley College of Education](#) to provide meaningful opportunities for the development of teachers.

The **Noyce teaching candidates** will be encouraged to use:

- Multiple and varied paths for certification (undergraduate, graduate, transfer and career-changing);
- Meaningful experiences for STEM majors in research and education settings including a summer internship modeled after current research programs; and
- Innovative programs leading to general science, biology and math certification.

Costner said Noyce scholars will be selected not only for academic ability and diverse representation, but for a disposition toward fairness and a belief that all children can learn. “They will teach, train and learn in high need communities and schools supporting the growth of a population that is mathematically and scientifically literate,” she said.

Federal grant officials noted that Winthrop would be a good candidate for the \$1.2 million grant because it also has recently been awarded two **U.S. Department of Education grants**, [NetSCOPE](#) and [NetLEAD](#), totaling \$13 million to train future educators and school leaders.

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