

# FLCC's model for teaching science gets \$1.5M grant



James Goodman, @goodman\_dandc 2:36 p.m. EDT October 9, 2015



(Photo: Photo provided)

Finger Lakes Community College has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to continue developing its undergraduate research programs in science and to help other community colleges do the same.

The NSF grant enables FLCC to train more of its faculty members and to expand the network of community colleges using the model developed by FLCC.

FLCC will extend its training to the seven community colleges in The City University of New York system. About 20 percent of the \$1.5 million will help pay for travel expenses of some students at these community colleges so that they can present their research at conferences.

This grant is part of the NSF's efforts to improve undergraduate education in science, technology, engineering and math.

"Most people think of research as something done outside the classroom. We're bringing research into the classroom," said James Hewlett, a professor of biology at FLCC and a key player in this initiative.

Noting that the teaching methodology is based on problem-solving, Hewlett added: "Instead of being instructor-based, it's student- based."

FLCC has formed the Community College Undergraduate Research Initiative to do this training, and with a \$3.4 million NSF grant in 2011 has worked with faculty at 60 community colleges.

As an example of the change in teaching, FLCC students in general biology classes learn scientific principles and procedures by doing projects that require them to gather and identify insects.

The FLCC initiative dates back to 2008, when it was awarded a \$500,000 NSF grant to develop a pilot program. Hewlett collaborated with John Van Niel, a professor of environmental conservation and horticulture at FLCC, to develop this teaching model. They worked with six other community colleges to revamp their biology programs to incorporate research.

Hewlett continues to work with Van Niel on this initiative. Workshops are held at various sites to train community college faculty in this methodology for teaching the natural sciences as well as other scientific disciplines, such as chemistry and physics.

JGOODMAN@Gannett.com

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