



## **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Partners with University of South Florida to Create University Center of Exemplary Mentoring**

**TAMPA, Fla. (April 17, 2014)** The University of South Florida is celebrating a major academic achievement with its selection by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to house one of just five University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring. Sloan chose USF based on its track record for educating underrepresented minority graduate students in STEM disciplines, particularly in marine science and engineering. The new partnership, which comes with a three-year grant of \$630,000, aims to help USF expand outreach to these students and support them through professional development. USF is the only university in Florida to receive this recognition, and the only non-AAU institution included nationwide, joining Cornell University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Pennsylvania State University and University of Iowa. Together the five UCEM awards total \$4.7 million.

The USF Sloan program will be led by Jose Zayas-Castro, professor and associate dean for research in the College of Engineering, Frank Muller-Karger, professor in the College of Marine Science, and managed by Bernard Batson, director of diversity programs at the College of Engineering. Professors Norma Alcantar (Chemical and Biomedical Engineering), Sanjukta Bhanja (Electrical Engineering), Nathan Crane (Mechanical Engineering), and Mark Jaroszeski (Chemical and Biomedical Engineering) will serve as members of a faculty coordinating committee to support the center's recruitment and retention efforts.

"Since the Sloan MPhD programs began in 2005, USF has been a national leader in the graduation of Latino and African American PhD students in both the engineering and marine science fields," according to Batson. "In addition to the fellowships, the new center calls for the establishment of student professional development and faculty mentoring initiatives to impact STEM graduate education throughout the University."

Selected through a competitive search, University of South Florida was chosen based on a number of criteria, including its historical success in recruiting and mentoring graduate students from underrepresented minorities; the quality of the departments and programs constituting the UCEM; the quality, breadth, and creativity of their planned future activities; and the strength of their institutional commitment to furthering education for underrepresented minorities in the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

USF is ranked in the top five nationally for conferring engineering doctorates to both African American and Latino students, according to *Diverse Issues in Higher Education's* annual listing of top 100 minority graduate degree producers. In 2013, 50% (7 of 14) PhDs awarded by the College of Marine Science were to African American and Hispanic students. According to NSF's Report on Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering (NSF 13-304), less than 2.5% of oceanography doctorates were awarded to African American and Hispanic students in 2010.

"The University of Iowa and the University of South Florida are developing creative, comprehensive, institution-wide programs to support minority students in STEM," says Dr. Elizabeth S. Boylan, Program Director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. "From the classroom, to the lab, to the Provost's office, these institutions are creating environments where minority STEM students can not only succeed, but thrive."

The creation of the University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring represents a change in the direction of the Sloan Foundation's Minority Ph.D. program. Launched in 1995, the program initially focused on supporting underrepresented students at the individual mentor or department level, providing scholarships to students in over 60 graduate programs across the country. A year-long program-wide evaluation in 2012 led to a change in strategy. "After consulting with students, professors, educators, administrators, and program participants all across the country, we determined that we could leverage our funds if we concentrated our resources for student scholarship support on fewer institutions," says Boylan, who oversaw the evaluation. "The most effective programs for educating students marshal resources from all levels of university faculty and administration and provide support at every step of a student's career. That's exactly what the University Centers of Exemplary Mentoring are expected to do."

What follows is a brief description of some of the activities planned for the new USF Centers.

#### **University of South Florida**

Based out of its successful programs in the College of Marine Sciences and College of Engineering, the University of South Florida's UCEM will be a unified, comprehensive, institutionally-integrated center devoted to mentoring minority STEM students. They plan to facilitate new professional development and leadership initiatives that will prepare minority doctoral students for successful transitions into academic, industry, government and non-traditional STEM careers after graduation. In addition to providing stipend support to 30 new minority doctoral students in engineering and oceanography, University of South Florida will host a number of enrichment activities, including an internal campaign to raise new funds for student support services, and a series of professional development seminars on topics like structuring summer research and scholarly writing.

In addition to the five UCEMs, the Foundation has also designated 10 university departments as Programs of Exemplary Mentoring (PEMs). Selected through a competitive submission process and awarded in recognition of exemplary commitment to recruiting and mentoring minority students, PEM

grants provide university STEM programs with \$60,000 to be used for recruitment and educational support activities, including funds for campus visits; graduate fairs; minority-focused tutorials, workshops, and seminars; and funds for professional travel . The PEMs now include:

**Arizona State University**, Mathematical, Computational, and Modeling Sciences Center

**Michigan State University**, Electrical and Computer Engineering

**Purdue University**, Chemistry

**Texas A&M University**, Agriculture and Life Sciences

**University of Arizona**, Optical Sciences

**University of Maryland, College Park**, Engineering

**University of Michigan**, Applied Physics

**University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez**, Chemical Engineering and Chemistry

**University of Texas, Austin**, Chemistry

**University of Texas, San Antonio**, Biology, Chemistry and Physics

“Our PEM grants recognize the extraordinary work graduate programs are doing mentoring and educating minority STEM students across the country,” says Elizabeth S. Boylan. “They are campus leaders that are demonstrating the creative, innovative role faculty can play in making sure minority graduate students succeed. The Sloan Foundation is honored to support the continuation and expansion of their efforts.”

In total, the five UCEMs and ten PEMs represent a multi-year \$5.3 million investment by the Sloan Foundation in institutional initiatives to support underrepresented minorities in STEM disciplines.

**-USF-**

*The University of South Florida is a high-impact, global research university dedicated to student success. USF is a Top 50 research university among both public and private institutions nationwide in total research expenditures, according to the National Science Foundation. Serving nearly 48,000 students, the USF System has an annual budget of \$1.5 billion and an annual economic impact of \$4.4 billion. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference.*

*The **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation** is a philanthropic, not-for-profit grantmaking institution based in New York City. Established in 1934 by Alfred Pritchard Sloan Jr., then-President and Chief Executive Officer of General Motors, the Foundation makes grants in support of original research and education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and economic performance. This grant was made through the Foundation’s STEM Higher Education Program Area, which aims to increase the quality and diversity of higher education in STEM fields. [www.sloan.org](http://www.sloan.org)*