

NMSU STEM Outreach Center receives nearly \$12 million grant

New Mexico State University's STEM Outreach Center, housed in the College of Education, recently received a nearly \$12 million grant to fund after school STEM programs in the Las Cruces, Hatch and Gadsden school districts.

The grant was awarded by the New Mexico Public Education Department's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program to implement programs in schools in the Gadsden Independent School District, Hatch Valley Public Schools and Las Cruces Public Schools. The grant provides \$2.6 million to NMSU annually for the next four years, allowing the STEM Outreach Center to provide its programming to qualifying elementary schools in each district.

Hatch Valley Public Schools received a \$433,147 sub-award from NMPED, of which \$125,000 will go to the STEM Outreach Center to pay for after school programs in Hatch. The Hatch Boys and Girls Club will receive \$82,000, and the district will retain \$226,000 for teacher stipends, transportation and data management.

STEM Outreach Center director Susan Brown, who was recently named the College of Education interim associate dean of research, said this is the biggest award the center has ever received. Brown said that with the recently awarded funds, the STEM Outreach Center will serve more than 11,000 children a year in southern New Mexico, along with families and educators through the 21st Century CCLC grant and other funding sources.

"Our nation, our state, and our community have unfilled jobs that are STEM-related. We want students to know at an early age that yes, they can be a scientist, an engineer, or a mathematician," Brown said. "We engage children K-8th grade in the world of STEM in our after school programs that also provide a safe environment for children. We are excited about this opportunity and thank NMPED for this opportunity to serve so many students, families and educators in southern New Mexico. The end result will be more students choosing a career in STEM."

The grant will allow the STEM Outreach Center to implement its suite of programs, including Digital Media Academy, or DiMA; Readers Theater; Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Aerospace Academy, or SEMAA; Creating Opportunities Using Numerical Thinking, or COUNT; and the Science Brain Battle, in elementary schools served through these grants in each district. STEM Outreach Center assistant director

Nicole Delgado said the schools have to be a C, D or F school, and have to be schoolwide Title 1 holding indicating a high socioeconomic need for such after school services.

The NMSU STEM Outreach Center is also partnering with Ngage to provide a community school at Lynn Middle School. The after school programs will be offered there, and the school will observe extended hours to serve families. The STEM Outreach Center will continue to work with La Semilla Food Center in the Gadsden school district to provide students with opportunities to grow produce and learn to cook with it for nutritious additions to their diets.

Hatch Valley Public Schools superintendent Linda Hale said the subaward will also help fund the Boys and Girls Club Teen Center in Hatch, which would provide extracurricular activities to about 150 teens.

"This is an awesome opportunity for us," Hale said. "We don't have the capacity to do something like this and because of our ruralness the need is there, but thanks to NMSU we'll be able to hire staff for the center and offer these programs to students."

College of Education Dean Donald Pope-Davis said the NMPED grant is an example of how prestigious the STEM Outreach Center has become.

"This grant will positively impact New Mexico students by giving them opportunities they may not have otherwise had access to," Pope-Davis said. "The grant is also testament to the hard work and dedication Dr. Brown has to STEM education and the children of New Mexico."

Information from NMSU