



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2013

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GRANT FROM NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION BOOSTS AAU INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE UNDERGRADUATE STEM EDUCATION

The [Association of American Universities](#) (AAU) has received a [grant](#) from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to help conduct the association's five-year [initiative](#) to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields at its member institutions. The grant was awarded by the NSF "Widening Implementation & Demonstration of Evidence-Based Reforms" ([WIDER](#)) program in the Education and Human Resources Directorate.

The overall objective of the AAU initiative is to influence the culture of STEM departments at AAU institutions so that faculty are encouraged to use "evidence-based" teaching practices, and are given training and other support to do so. Evidence-based practices are those proven by research to be more effective in helping students learn and in better engaging students in STEM disciplines. The two-year, \$294,000 grant from NSF will enable AAU to develop a set of metrics that will allow individual institutions to evaluate their use of evidence-based teaching practices.

AAU President Hunter Rawlings said the NSF grant is critical to the progress of the AAU initiative.

"We appreciate the fact that NSF views the AAU STEM initiative as a powerful means of shifting the culture of undergraduate STEM instruction," he said. "A crucial step in the initiative is the development and use of metrics to evaluate institutions' progress in the use of evidence-based instruction," he said. "Many AAU faculty members are already leading the way in bringing about change to STEM teaching and learning practices. We intend to accelerate and broaden the change at our universities, and it's clear from the interest in this initiative that they are eager to participate."

A three-year, \$4.7 million grant received last October from the [Helmsley Charitable Trust](#) has enabled the AAU initiative to develop a [framework](#) of key elements that a university must address in order to ensure sustainable change in STEM undergraduate teaching and learning. The Helmsley grant is also supporting the process of designating the eight AAU universities that

will serve as STEM project sites to implement and test the framework. It will also provide financial support over three years for work at those sites, which will be selected in June.

The metrics developed with the NSF grant will play a central role in helping the eight sites to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Additional information about the AAU Undergraduate STEM education initiative can be found [here](#).

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The [Association of American Universities](#) is an association of 59 U.S. and two Canadian research universities organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate and professional education, undergraduate education, and public service in research universities.

The National Science Foundation ([NSF](#)) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1950 "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense..." With an annual budget of about \$7.0 billion (FY 2012), it is the funding source for approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America's colleges and universities. In many fields such as mathematics, computer science and the social sciences, NSF is the major source of federal backing.

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting effective nonprofits in a variety of selected areas. Since 2008, when the Trust began its active grant making, it has committed more than \$800 million to a wide range of charitable organizations. Through its National Education Program, the Trust views education as a lever to advance both American economic competitiveness and individual social mobility. In K-12, the Trust focuses on ensuring all students graduate high school prepared for college or careers by supporting teacher effectiveness and the implementation of high academic standards. In postsecondary education, the Trust is primarily interested in increasing the number of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates who can participate in high growth sectors of the economy. The Trust also focuses on policy levers that improve postsecondary completion, particularly for underrepresented populations. For more information, please visit www.helmsleytrust.org.