



MathScience Innovation Center

Imagine. Create. Lead.

Contact: Dr. Julia Cothron
Tel. (804) 343-6525
Email: jcothron@msinnovation.info

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 1, 2008

MSP GRANT ENABLES AREA TEACHERS TO BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS FOR RIGOROUS COURSEWORK

The MathScience Innovation Center, in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University and the College of William & Mary, will offer selected middle and senior high teachers expanded coursework in the biology, earth and environmental sciences, as well as the opportunity to pursue a Master of Interdisciplinary Studies. In the spring of 2008, the Center received funding of \$522,576 through the competitive MathScience Partnership Grants administered by the Virginia Department of Education. The project seeks to improve teachers' abilities to prepare students for rigorous coursework in the sciences.

From the summer of 2008 to the fall of 2009, teachers can enroll in 18 graduate credits applicable to a master's degree. Core offerings include coursework from VCU's Center for Environmental Studies such as oceanography, meteorology, introductory and advanced environmental field courses, and geospatial technology, as well as new courses in climatology and hydrogeology. Through VCU's Summer Institute for Teachers, teachers will explore new topics in biotechnology, forensic science and systems biology. To better prepare teachers of pre-AP, AP, and dual enrollment, special courses on AP Biology and AP Environmental Science will be developed and offered. Faculty from VCU, W & M, and the Center collaborate on course development and implementation. Courses include face-to-face, virtual and blended classes. Creation of more virtual courses, which enable teachers from varied geographic areas to participate, is a project objective.

As teachers began their coursework, positive comments emanated. Participants commented on the unique field experiences offered in the oceanography course, including a multiday field experience at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences field station on the Eastern Shore. For several, the opportunity to use sophisticated equipment and to interact with VCU researchers in genetics and

forensics were a highlight of the summer. As a result of the AP Environmental Course, which ended in the late fall, participants modified their courses to increase rigor, especially in the areas of communication, critical thinking and scientific research. Through interactions, participants learned the critical importance of rigor in each class leading to advanced placement and dual enrollment courses.

Thirty teachers from seven school divisions are currently participating in the grant.

Chesterfield County: Stephanie Barber, Frank Cardella, Laura Davenport, Jacqueline Gooden-Seay, Reese Gordy, Michelle Huber, Jacqueline Marshall, Felicity Selvoski;

Essex County: Kenneth Newsom;

Henrico County: Mark Apelt, Carla Harrison-Lane, Julia Jackson;

Hopewell City: Jessica Ciokan, Kelly Kirksey, Kelly Ubbing;

Powhatan County: Michelle Whitehurst;

Richmond City: Deandra Braxton, Diana Braxton, Emily Betts, Maricia Chavis, Kimberly Colbert, Joyce Davis, Renee Goode-Boyd, Cynthia Grant Lewis, George Powell, Mary Smith, Denise Stanton, Sandra Taylor

Roanoke City: Teresa Grisso, Melinda Richardson

The Math Science Innovation Center is a 42-year-old organization dedicated to futuristic math and science education for K-12 teachers and students. Its vision for 2015 focuses on implementing new programs in fractal geometry, engineering, nanotechnology, environmental modeling, and distance learning. The MathScience Innovation Center is an educational consortium comprised of eight school divisions: Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Hanover, Henrico, King William, Petersburg, Powhatan, and Richmond. Other divisions also participate through abbreviated memberships: Charles City, Hopewell, Prince George, and the Steward School.