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Grant aids foreign students project

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A \$30,000 grant will help immigrant and refugee students succeed at St. Cloud State University.

The grant, awarded by the Otto Bremer Foundation, will be used for a pilot project that tailors certain classes already offered at St. Cloud State to meet the needs of those students, said Julie Condon, coordinator of the English as Second Language program at St. Cloud State.

Many of the targeted students are adults who have not been in school for a while, attended high school in their native country or have language needs.

"We want them to come to school, but we need to have special classes to get them up to speed so they can succeed in general education classes like everybody else," Condon said.

The grant will allow Condon and John Grether, co-director of the project, to modify three classes - basic information media, reading and studying skills, and college transitions.

The project will run during the 2003 spring and fall semesters.

This project also is important because many of the students rely on financial aid to attend school, and if they fail during their first semester they won't qualify for financial aid, Condon said.

"We want to avoid that situation. We want to give them a better start," she said.

Condon expects 20 students to enroll for the modified classes this spring.

If the project is successful, Condon and Grether will ask the university to include the classes in its ongoing curriculum.

"We really want to get to know (the students) and give them the best advice so they can work their way up to the more difficult classes," Condon said.