

SCSU education awarded

By Regina Eckes

SCSU's College of Education and District 742 have just been awarded the largest grant in SCSU history.

The Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership Grant consists of \$5 million over a five-year period to help develop and improve teacher preparation for P-12 education and is given to only four schools in the nation. Director of the Office of Clinical Experiences Teresa Heck at SCSU said the university has developed a strong relationship with District 742 over the last several years. SCSU is the 12th largest producer of teachers in the nation and nearly a quarter of SCSU student teachers get their start in St. Cloud public schools.

"We were delighted to receive the grant," Heck said. "It's a huge honor to be chosen and I think the strength of the partnership that we have with District 742 was certainly a part of that."

Over the summer, members of the College Education and District 742 schools got together and brainstormed on how they could enhance the current educational system with the increase in class size. After completing a pre-application in early June, they were asked to apply for the full grant later in the summer.

The grant uses a co-teaching program that combines the knowledge of an experienced teacher with a student teacher involved in the same class. As partners in the classroom, the student teacher will develop class plans and assignments while the other teacher will be present to assist and guide them.

Associate dean of the College of Education Nancy Bacharach has talked about how the co-teaching program will benefit P-12 students as well. Not only will student teachers receive mentoring and assistance, having two teachers in the classroom will help narrow the student-to-teacher ratio. Bacharach said having more teachers with larger class sizes will enable students to receive more individual attention and have their educational needs fulfilled.

Also included in the co-teaching program is the implementation of new

technologies to develop strategies and track the progress of the program. Personal digital assistants will be used to provide constant documentation on a teacher's performance during their experience. Diversified Media Resources, an electric communications provider in St. Cloud, will develop media presentations that will demonstrate co-teaching strategies to parents and students.

Because the grant is not renewable after the five-year period, the College of Education and District 742 will prepare and complete extensive progress reports every year and campaign to get people involved and show their support for the program. Final assessments will be done after the fifth year and many are hoping that the co-teaching program will be able to continue. Many involved in writing the grant believe the right amount of funding can increase the chances of having a successful program.

"We have a lot of goals and fortunately for us we were given the grant which will provide us with tremendous opportunity to look at how things are moving and what kind of things we can do," Heck said. "(The grant) can make a huge difference in an institution that prepares as many teachers as we do."