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SCSU project gets \$5 million grant

Times staff report

St. Cloud State University's college of education will receive almost \$5 million for a five-year project designed to enhance teacher preparation.

The grant -- one of four in the nation -- is from the U.S. Department of Education, university officials announced Friday.

St. Cloud State is partnering with the St. Cloud school district for the project.

"This is the largest grant ever awarded to St. Cloud State and one of the largest to a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system member," said Joane McKay, dean of the college of education. "We are very proud of what this will do for children in today's schools."

The Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership Grant is meant to redefine the roles of teachers in training and in-service teachers using the co-teaching approach.

Co-teaching combines the knowledge and strengths of the experienced teacher and the student teacher. The approach teaches student teachers to be more collaborative and lowers the student-to-teacher ratio in classrooms.

"As classrooms become more diverse, teacher educators are only too aware of the current need to change past practices," said Nancy Bacharach, project director and associate dean of the college of education. "Yet, we rarely have an opportunity for a five-year infusion of federal money to examine new models."

The co-teaching approach will be used first in St. Cloud schools but may expand to area schools where St. Cloud State students are placed as student teachers.

The five-year project also includes Web-based software to document student-teacher performance, an interactive Web site for communication and to share resources, and professional development opportunities for teachers

in the school district.

St. Cloud State prepares about 600 teachers each year, making it the 12th largest educator of teachers in the nation.