

SCSU receives \$4 million in grants

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SCSU received about \$4 million in grants last year to fund projects, to help the community and enhance learning for students and staff.

This money was generated with the help of the Office of Sponsored Programs that encourages and assists SCSU faculty and staff members to engage in research and scholarly activities for students.

"It's all grant and contract money, which means it's not coming from the university," said assistant vice president of Academic Affairs Richard Rothaus who works at Sponsored Programs. "It's a substantial chunk of money that wouldn't be on campus otherwise and has a huge impact on what is available for students."

Rothaus said some money went toward a study on how to get people to donate more money to charities. Studies conducted by associate professor of economics Philip Grossman indicate that replacing the current system of tax dollars with a matching subsidy system could achieve the same amount of contributions to non-profit and charitable organizations at a lower cost. Grossman involved students in his project.

"That is a direct benefit to the student because it's not, 'Here's your textbook.' It's actual research that's being done and students get to be a part of it," Rothaus said.

Exchanger mask

Another grant was awarded to SCSU's Human Performance Lab (HPL) to study the exchanger mask and the effects of cold on the body.

The study was led by associate professor John Seifert and a team of researchers and students.

Cold has a big impact on physiological functions. It's not so much that you feel cold, but that you inhale cold air. The exchanger mask works by retaining some of the heat when you exhale so that when you inhale, that air is warm and humidified, keeping you warmer," Seifert said.

Seifert said this is more of a developmental type of project to improve upon the exchanger mask and see if there is a better way to get the job done.

The mask is beneficial to asthmatics who have problems breathing cold air and people with hypertension (high blood pressure) who become more at risk for heart attacks and strokes when their bodies are cold.

"(A) hypertensive person's blood pressure will go up 20 to 25 percent (when outdoors in cold weather) but when they went outside wearing the mask, their blood pressure was maintained," Seifert said.

By doing this experiment, Seifert said students will gain experience gathering data and experience presenting the information in front of their peers and professionals.

"The exchanger study was a great project to work on," said graduate student Jeremy Frost. "This research has important implications to those who live and work in cold environments. Understanding the physiological changes the body goes through allows us to attempt to prevent unwanted changes when we are exposed to the cold. Preventing these changes is safer and can also potentially benefit performance in cold environments."

Helping stroke victims

In collaboration with the St. Cloud hospital, assistant professor of communication disorders G.N. Rangamani used grant money to start the first group therapy program in St. Cloud for stroke victims with aphasia, a communication disorder affecting one's ability to understand and/or express feelings and thoughts.

Under the supervision of licensed speech-language pathologists, graduate students in the Department of Communication Disorders from SCSU will help patients learn communication skills to enhance their day-to-day living.

"There is only a limited amount of time insurance will pay for speech therapy. Students assist with therapy that these patients wouldn't get otherwise," said Rothaus. "It takes a small chunk of money to make a big difference like that."

Future plans

Rothaus said one project he is working on is to build an environmental field station in Little Falls for students to conduct research projects.

"We have a long tradition of faculty doing research projects out there. One example of that is a graduate student studying invasive species trying to figure out if they are harmful," Rothaus said.

There is not a physical facility on-site now, but Rothaus said he hopes to have a site with labs and microscopes built by summer.

"Students will be able to go out there and be much more directly involved," Rothaus said.

"(Using grant money) is a huge qualitative difference in a student education," Rothaus said, "Money is not the point. It's the projects money creates to serve the students and the community."