



News & Information Services

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April 20, 2006

NOTE: To arrange interviews on the new Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education, contact Dr. Jack Rhoton, professor of science education, at (423) 439-7589 or via rhotonj@etsu.edu, and Dr. Anant Godbole, professor and chair of mathematics, at 439-5359 or via godbolea@etsu.edu. Both will be back in their offices on Monday, April 24.

THEC approves ETSU's new interdisciplinary Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education designed to improve K-16 education

JOHNSON CITY – A multi-faceted **Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education**, envisioned by East Tennessee State University and approved today by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, will ultimately improve the education of K-16 students in these disciplines.

The university's fourth Center of Excellence is an interdisciplinary free-standing collaborative between the College of Arts and Sciences and the Claudius G. Clemmer College of Education, led by their respective deans, Drs. Gordon Anderson and Hal Knight.

The Center will provide a focused venue and support mechanism for faculty to channel their interests toward **improving K-16 mathematics and science education**, according to ETSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Bert C. Bach, who presented an overview of the Center at the THEC meeting. It will serve as a "think tank" that elicits "best practices" from research and academics as well as classroom teachers.

He said it will also **cultivate partnerships with schools and communities** that draw on the university's experience gained from its longstanding Kellogg Foundation-funded focus on interdisciplinary and community-based initiatives. Additionally, the Center **will support a new Governor's School in Scientific Models and Data Analysis at ETSU** that is presently awaiting approval from Tennessee Education Commissioner Lana Seivers.

Bach noted that the Center **will also support the revisioning of University School**, ETSU's K-12 laboratory school, **as a science, mathematics and technology-focused "signature school."** The Center will forge linkages with the federal government, regional compacts like the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), other colleges and universities, and foundations, organizations and state agencies such as THEC, the Tennessee Board of Regents, the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education.

While pursuing strategies and experiences designed to **enhance teacher preparation and professional development**, the Center will also explore and seek support for programs aimed at **increasing the supply and quality of math and science educators in Tennessee's workforce.**

The new Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education will partner with ETSU's Office of Sponsored Programs to offer support for Faculty Fellows from various disciplines who pursue external funding for innovative approaches to math and science education. Part of this will support **applied research initiatives that assess implications for math and science curricula used in countries around the world.**

As an added benefit, the university is **establishing six \$3,000 annual scholarships** for selected exemplary ETSU math or science majors enrolled at the sophomore level or above who meet certain criteria. Faculty will nominate outstanding students from the departments of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics.

Among other requirements, the **ETSU Math and Science Scholars** will participate in a one-hour seminar course taken with a mathematics faculty mentor. The seminar will focus on specialized learning experiences for the Scholars while introducing them to potential opportunities in the fields of math and science education.

The **primary designers** of the new ETSU Center's components and mission are **Dr. Anant Godbole**, professor and chair of mathematics, and **Dr. Jack Rhoton**, professor of science education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The Center is an outgrowth of the university's long and successful history of providing programs to advance K-16 student learning in mathematics and science education.

Another leader in the creation of the Center is **Dr. Mark Musick**, president emeritus of the SREB and current holder of the ETSU James H. Quillen Chair of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Citing statistics from a recent national policy document, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, the ETSU professors noted that dwindling numbers of students in engineering, chemistry, math and related programs in Tennessee colleges and universities actually mirror the national arena.

Statistics show that fewer than one-third of 4th and 8th grade students perform at or above a proficient level in math, one-third of 4th graders and one-fifth of 8th graders cannot perform basic mathematical computations, and 12th grade students perform below the international average on general knowledge in math and science.

In addition, just 41 percent of American 8th graders were taught by a discipline-prepared mathematics teacher, while the international average of discipline-prepared math teachers is 71 percent.

The creators of ETSU's Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education intend to help effect positive changes in these statistics.

For information on the Center of Excellence or any of its components, contact Rhoton at (423) 439-7589 or via rhotonj@etsu.edu, and Godbole at 439-5359 or via godbolea@etsu.edu.

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