

Kansas NSF EPSCoR awarded \$1.176 million to enhance Kansas' cyber networking infrastructure

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LAWRENCE — The National Science Foundation has awarded \$1.176 million over two years to three universities in Kansas (Kansas State University/K-State, The University of Kansas/KU and Wichita State University/WSU) who will collaborate to upgrade a shared data network that will better connect Kansas' educational institutions.

The funded project, called *Prairie Light: Next Generation Optical Networking for Mid Continent Science*, will boost the bandwidth of KanREN, the Kansas Research and Education Network, significantly and make the network more stable and reliable to benefit research initiatives in Kansas.

“The result will be a Kansas Science Commons on which researchers at institutions of higher education can build stronger research collaborations through broader sharing of sophisticated instruments and computing resources, and students will learn in an environment rich with tools and expertise,” said Donald F. (Rick) McMullen, director and senior scientist for research computing at KU. “This next-generation research network will enable activities that maximize national and state investments in computing infrastructure at individual campuses by making them easier to share and to build into distributed research collaborations.”

Scientific inquiry depends on advanced data communications, and the proposed upgrades will help scientists acquire and analyze large data sets and also collaborate over wider areas.

Many research projects in Kansas will benefit from the improved network, including two Kansas NSF EPSCoR initiatives, *Oklahoma and Kansas: A cyberCommons for Ecological Forecasting and Climate Change and Renewable Energy: Basic Science, Impacts and Mitigation*. Scientists for these two projects are located in various locations in Kansas and, in the case of *cyberCommons*, Oklahoma as well.

A key partner in the *Prairie Light* project is KanREN, a non-profit consortium of colleges, universities, school districts and other organizations in Kansas, brought together to facilitate inter-institutional communication and collaboration and to provide statewide high speed network backbone for education and research.

The upgrades made possible by this award also will support the 800+ member institutions of Kan-ed, a statewide networking organization that encompasses two- and four-year colleges, most of the unified school districts and other schools, libraries and hospitals.

Students at Kansas' leading research universities as well as two- and four-year institutions of higher learning will benefit from new tools and expertise provided in the improved data network. Educational initiatives that will be directly impacted include *Climate Change in Indigenous Communities*, a program that trains Native American students in the sciences at Haskell Indian Nations University; *Bridges to Baccalaureates*, a partnership of three southwestern Kansas community colleges, two Kansas City, Kan., community colleges and K-State; *Women and Hispanics in Sciences* at Emporia State University; and the *McNair Scholars Program* at KU, K-State and WSU, in which undergraduate students from groups underrepresented in the sciences explore research methodology and are mentored to pursue graduate degrees.

The award will be administered through the Kansas NSF EPSCoR office, located on KU's West Campus.

Bowman-James is the Principal Investigator for the project. The Co-Principal Investigators are Daniel Andresen, K-State, Donald F. (Rick) McMullen, KU, and Ravi Pendse, WSU.

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Note to Editors: This news release is being distributed simultaneously by several of the institutions involved in the NSF-EPSCoR *Prairie Light* award. The releases may vary slightly in their wording but the information is substantially the same.