



KEAN

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# Kean University Wins Two National Science Foundation Grants to Support Diversity in Computer Science

Sep 21, 2021



Kean University is leading a five-school consortium that received a \$5 million research grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to increase the number of high-achieving minority students entering the fields of cybersecurity and data science.

In a separate, second announcement from NSF, Kean will also share in a \$2.9 million grant supporting and encouraging students, especially minorities and women, to pursue doctoral degrees in the computing sciences at major research universities, designated as R1 institutions.

“Kean University is thrilled to receive these awards from the National Science Foundation supporting diverse students at the undergraduate and graduate levels in computer science and cybersecurity,” said Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D. “These awards will give Kean students direct contact with mentors and projects at top research institutions. We know this will inspire students to go on to earn their doctorates and encourage them to produce meaningful research throughout their academic careers.”

The \$5 million NSF grant will contribute to the “national need for well-educated scientists, mathematicians, engineers and technicians” by supporting the retention and graduation of high-achieving, low-income students, according to the award description. A goal is also to build regional workforce strength in cybersecurity and data science. Of the total funding, \$1.6 million is earmarked for Kean.

Teaming up with four other New Jersey institutions – New Jersey Institute of Technology, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Union County College and Brookdale Community College – Kean will investigate methods for creating equitable access for students and mentoring minority students. The research project spans five years.

The \$5 million provides scholarship funding for 256 students across the schools, with the bulk awarded in 2022-2023. It also supports undergraduate research, faculty mentoring and advising, and will be used to create workshops for student collaboration.

“Given the demographics of the participating schools, it is anticipated that at least 50% of students awarded scholarships will be from underrepresented minority groups, including women,” said Patricia Morreale, Ph.D., director of the School of Computer Science and Technology at Kean and principal investigator on the grant. Kean faculty Dr. Jing-Chiou Liou, Dr. Ching-Yu Huang, and Dr. Daehan Kwak of the School of Computer Science and Technology are co-PIs on the grant.

The second grant, for \$2.9 million, will be led by the University of Texas-EI Paso and will extend the work of the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (CAHSI). It supports a research-based framework for attracting, preparing, and supporting female students and others from underrepresented groups as they pursue graduate degrees in computing science.

“The focus of this grant is to move students on to graduate degrees,” Morreale said. “Kean will be working with doctorate-granting R1 institutions to identify and share pathways to graduate school for Kean computer science and information technology students, with a goal of Kean students continuing on to R1 schools after graduation. This will address a critical national need for more students to pursue graduate education in computer science.”

Kean is designated as a Hispanic-Serving institution, and has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* for its diversity and for its work in supporting students' social mobility.

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