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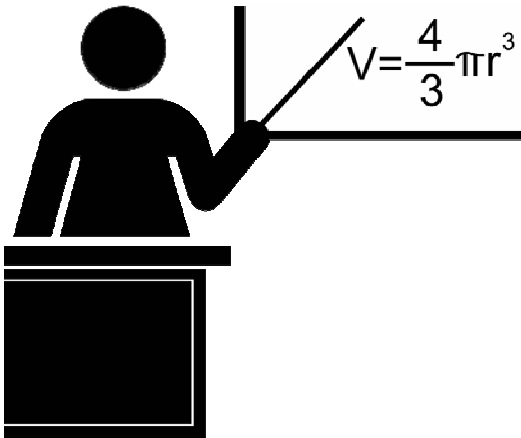
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National Science Foundation grant to fund study of classroom algebra instruction at two MCC schools

(SCOTTSDALE, Ariz., July 13, 2016) -- Two Maricopa Community Colleges will be part of a three-year, \$2.3 million research grant from the National Science Foundation to study how algebra is being taught at community colleges.

Classrooms at Glendale Community College and Scottsdale Community College will be analyzed as part of the study. Four other community colleges in Michigan and Minnesota also will be studied.



"We will be looking at the relationship between math instructors, students and the math itself," said Glendale Community College math faculty Laura Watkins, the grant's principal investigator.

In addition to videotaping classes, the study calls for reviewing course materials for effectiveness.

"There are many factors and characteristics that make community college instruction different than K-12 or university instruction," Watkins said. "We're going to analyze those characteristics and factors."

The grant will begin as a pilot program this fall. The full research project will launch in spring 2017 and carry on into 2018.

Researchers hope the study will lead to case studies that illustrate successful components of face-to-face teaching.

"Since we do not have opportunities to observe our faculty peers in the classroom, we do not fully know what is happening relative to the teaching and learning in community college mathematics classes," said April Strom, math faculty at Scottsdale Community College, who will be one of five investigators carrying out the Arizona part of the project. "Now, we will be able to learn more about teaching and learning."

Watkins pointed out that while NSF has provided grants to study math instruction at the K-12 and university levels, very few research grants have focused on community college instruction.

"We've been asking (NSF) for faculty development grants for community college instructors and they've always responded that we need more data," she said. "This project will help us understand the community college landscape for algebra instruction."

Strom pointed out that teaching algebra at community colleges and in high school has come under criticism by some who maintain algebra should not be required of all students. Studies such as these can counter those arguments, she says.

"It's not good enough to simply focus on procedures and algorithms," said Strom. "We need to focus on problem solving and ways of thinking."

Strom is principal investigator for the Arizona Mathematics Partnership (AMP), which received a \$9 million, five-year grant in 2012 from the NSF to implement strategies aimed at helping middle school math teachers be more effective in teaching math. Watkins has been serving as an investigator on that project as well.

So far, more than 300 middle-school teachers have received training through AMP.

About the National Science Foundation: NSF is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering. In fiscal year 2016, its budget is \$7.5 billion. NSF funds reach all 50 states through grants to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities and other institutions. Each year, NSF receives more than 48,000 competitive proposals for funding and makes about 12,000 new funding awards. NSF also awards about \$626 million in professional and service contracts yearly.

Scottsdale Community College is a premier two-year higher education institution that serves the needs of its diverse communities by providing innovative and creative opportunities to learn, grow and achieve. We offer affordable, high-quality instruction to traditional and non-traditional students, career-minded professionals and life-long learners.

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