

BSC partners with local schools to receive \$9.9 million NSF grant

The National Science Foundation as part of the Mathematics Science Partnership grant program has awarded \$9.9 million to the Greater Birmingham Mathematics Partnership (GBMP) to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics in local middle schools.

The GBMP is a consortium made up of Birmingham-Southern; UAB; the eight school districts of Bessemer, Fairfield, Homewood, Hoover, Jefferson County, Mountain Brook, Shelby County, and Vestavia; and the Mathematics Education Collaborative (MEC), a Seattle-based nonprofit organization established to promote partnerships and to provide education communities with the necessary support to accomplish the goal of quality mathematics education for all.

“This is a tremendous boost for our local middle school teachers and the young students they educate,” said Dr. Bernadette Mullins, associate mathematics professor at BSC and principal investigator on the grant project. “It will pump nearly \$10 million over the next five years into making stronger mathematics teachers and stronger mathematics learners.”

The partnership is a multidimensional program that will provide high-quality professional development to all middle school teachers in the eight districts, select pre-service teachers, some elementary school teachers, and higher education professors.

The cornerstone of the professional development will be a series of two-week, in-depth mathematics content courses to be offered in the summer that model best practice teaching methods. The MEC will provide the instruction for the summer courses and the yearlong follow-up. The follow-up during the year not only will involve the teachers from the summer courses, but also provide sessions for administrators, parents, and the public. Mathematics, education, and engineering professors from BSC and UAB will participate in the summer courses and in the follow-up along with the teachers.

The professors from BSC and UAB will make other important contributions as well. For example, the engineering professors will design engineering projects for middle school students. These units will help make mathematics come alive and will demonstrate the relevance of mathematics in real-world settings. In addition, the mathematics professors will collaborate with education professors to develop new courses tailored specifically for future middle school teachers as well as a middle school certification.

There also will be a strong evaluation and research component of the project managed by Dr. Scott Snyder, director of the UAB Center for Educational Accountability. The major question being researched is whether involving and educating all the stakeholders and providing quality professional development translates into improved mathematics learning and narrowing of the achievement gap.

Other principal participants in the grant are Dr. Faye Clark, a community volunteer and project co-director; Dr. Ann Dominick, math specialist for the Hoover City School System and project co-director; Dr. Michael Froning, dean of the UAB School of Education; Dr. Melinda Lalor, UAB associate professor of civil and environmental engineering; Dr. John Mayer, UAB professor of natural science and mathematics; Dr. Eileen Moore, BSC professor of education; and Dr. Ruth Parker, Mathematics Education Collaborative CEO.

Art professor receives prestigious ASCA fellowship grant



Venz

Pamela Venz, associate professor of art, has been awarded one of 15 fellowship grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

The grants are awarded to individual artists and are based on merit of work, career achievement, career potential, and service to the state. The awards will support artistic endeavors through fall 2005.

“I’m thrilled with the honor,” said Venz, who joined the BSC faculty in 1998. “To be recognized at the state level is a feather in my cap. The awards are very competitive with only six awards this year in the category of visual arts and I am very pleased to have received one this year.”

Venz plans to use the \$5,000 grant to create a new portfolio of pieces that will help increase her recognition outside the Southeast region. Trained both as a sculptor and a photographer, her portfolio will consist of photography and sculpture as well as multi-media pieces incorporating both of these disciplines. “I am very interested in the perception of reality in photography even though it is a two-dimensional abstraction,” she explained. “And I’m also interested in the perceived abstraction of sculpture, even though because it is three-dimensional it is actually more real.”

Fellowships are the most prestigious of grants awarded annually by ASCA. They are given to artists working in arts administration, crafts, dance, design, media/photography, music, literature, theatre, and visual arts.



This photo called “Water Lillies” was taken in Bellagio, Italy, by Associate Professor of Art Pamela Venz.