

Mount Mary University: Awarded \$7.8 million in federal grants in 2021

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 28, 2021

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MILWAUKEE (September 28, 2021) – Mount Mary University has been awarded a \$4.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for “Proyecto Descubrir,” or Project Discovery, a four-year program to increase the number of Hispanic and low-income women enrolled in STEM programs by 10 percent.

This brings Mount Mary’s federal funding awarded since August to \$7.8 million; earlier this year the institution was also awarded a \$3 million grant from the National Science Foundation for “STEM by Design,” a program to introduce strong technology elements throughout the institution and offer a human-technology interface degree program. Both of these grants were geared toward schools based on their status as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); Mount Mary became a HSI in spring 2020 and is one of two schools in Wisconsin eligible for such grants.

“These grants confirm the caliber of the University’s programming and leadership, and highlight our trajectory,” said Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Julie Landry. “Mount Mary is withholding nothing to close the educational and opportunity gap for these women as we cultivate and maintain an inclusive community.”

About Proyecto Descubrir[\[1\]](#)

This \$4.7 million, four-year grant will address a gap in Hispanic and low-income women enrolled in a STEM degree program through a multi-pronged approach to remove barriers and increase retention and completion.

“Specifically, the project will increase the number of Hispanic and low-income women entering STEM by engaging community college and dual-enrolled students in STEM and build skills for in-demand careers, foster students’ sense of community

and connect students and their influencers to resources,” said Natural & Health Sciences and Education Dean Cheryl Bailey.

This program will be led by Jeremy Edison, assistant professor of mathematics and Miguel Fernandes, assistant professor of biology.

About STEM by Design[2]

Both STEM and non-STEM majors need expertise with technology that is advancing their respective fields; representation from women of color is especially needed in order to influence future technology, Bailey said.

This five-year grant will introduce strong technology elements throughout the institution and offer a human-technology interface (also known as User Experience, or UX) degree program.

“Mount Mary seeks to attract and empower diverse women to gain technology competencies and digital technology literacy as a foundation toward the development of a sense of belonging, a confident voice, and full inclusion in the digital STEM workforce,” said Bob Schwartz, dean of the Schools of Arts & Design and Business.

Additional federal grants

Currently, Mount Mary is administering \$16.8 million in federal grants that have been awarded over the past five years. Another notable grant includes a five-year, \$1 million scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM) grant from the National Science Foundation for the Dr. Jewel Plummer-Cobb Scholars program, named after a notable African American cancer researcher. This is designed to increase retention and graduation rates of limited income, academically strong students within chemistry, biology and food science chemistry majors. The program’s goal is to expand access to STEM careers for women and widen the talent pool of highly skilled scientists in the Milwaukee area.

This week, Mount Mary also received approval of a \$120,000 four-year grant through the U.S. Department of Education[3] designed to increase student access to high-quality child care, in order to remove financial barriers for student parents who would like to pursue a college degree. Funds are paid directly to the child care provider, primarily the new on-campus Wauwatosa Day Care and Learning Center located at Trinity Woods. This facility is set to open in late fall 2021.

Over the past five years MMU has had tremendous success in securing federal grants that provide financial support to our students,” said Mount Mary University Grants Manager Cassie Jeffrey-Miller. “Our new CCAMPIS child care grant will provide financial support to a population with one of the greatest financial needs, student mothers.”

“Mount Mary has an ongoing commitment to equal education for students,” said Mount Mary President Christine Pharr, Ph.D., “Mount Mary was ranked number one in the Midwest for social mobility, which measures the success rate of graduating Pell students based upon six-year graduation rates. These grants poise Mount Mary to not only be designated as a HSI but also to implement changes to our campus community that will even better position students for success.”