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NSF Pledges \$586,500 to Underrepresented Students in STEM Programs at RWU

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NSF Pledges \$586,500 to Underrepresented Students in STEM Programs at RWU

Grant will allow University to provide 15 four-year, \$26,000/year scholarships to selected students in engineering, biology and marine biology



July 17, 2012

BRISTOL, R.I. – The [National Science Foundation](#) has awarded a \$149,500 grant – with an additional \$437,000 to follow in subsequent years – to Roger Williams University for a program designed to attract and support underrepresented students into academic programs in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

The STEM Intercultural Leadership Ambassador Scholars program (STILAS) will offer each recipient an annual scholarship of \$26,000 through a combination of \$10,000 in NSF funds and \$16,000 in funds ensured by the University. Each scholarship is guaranteed for four years, provided a 3.0 GPA is maintained.

The University developed STILAS to bring a diverse pool of academically talented students to its engineering, biology and marine biology programs and to support, graduate and prepare them for success in the STEM fields. The grant will assist Roger Williams with its goal of encouraging more underrepresented students to pursue careers and succeed in these vital disciplines.

“Solving the grand challenges in engineering and the sciences relies on bringing to the table individuals from a wide array of backgrounds,” says Linda Riley, engineering program coordinator, professor and STILAS steering committee member. “You always find a richer solution.”

University
Lonnie Guralnick, interim dean of the Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences and member of the STILAS steering committee, agrees: “When our classrooms are home to students who offer a diversity of experiences, that adds value to the education we provide. Students take on questions from different perspectives – that makes us more effective scientists who are more culturally aware.”

The STILAS program builds not only on the University’s academic strengths in engineering, biology and marine biology, but on the successful Intercultural Leadership Ambassador (ILA) initiative, an academic and co-curricular support program for underrepresented students that graduated its second cohort in May 2012.

Like ILA, STILAS will provide programming and support outside of the classroom; connect students with peer mentors, faculty advisors and academic tutors; offer access to relevant internships and research projects; and engage students in seminars, brown-bag discussions, field trips and activities that promote graduate school and STEM employment opportunities.

STILAS also allows the University to expand upon a burgeoning set of partnerships with urban high schools in the Northeast that focus on engineering, science and technology. One such example is a summer studies pipeline program at Roger Williams launched with the New York Harbor School, a maritime-focused public school in New York City.

In awarding the grant to Roger Williams, the National Science Foundation noted that the project “increases the academic grounding and future opportunities for students historically underrepresented in the STEM fields and supports graduates who are ready to enter industry... STILAS is building, assessing and disseminating a comprehensive model that can inform STEM outreach to underrepresented students elsewhere.”

The STILAS steering committee will identify the first four recipients for the 2012-13 academic year and expand the number in subsequent years, for a total of 15 STILAS students enrolled over the duration of the five-year grant.

Recipients must enroll in a STEM program. Otherwise, selection criteria mirror those of the ILA program: students must have overcome a life challenge in pursuit of education; be first-generation college students or speak English as a second language; and come to the University from an under-resourced community.

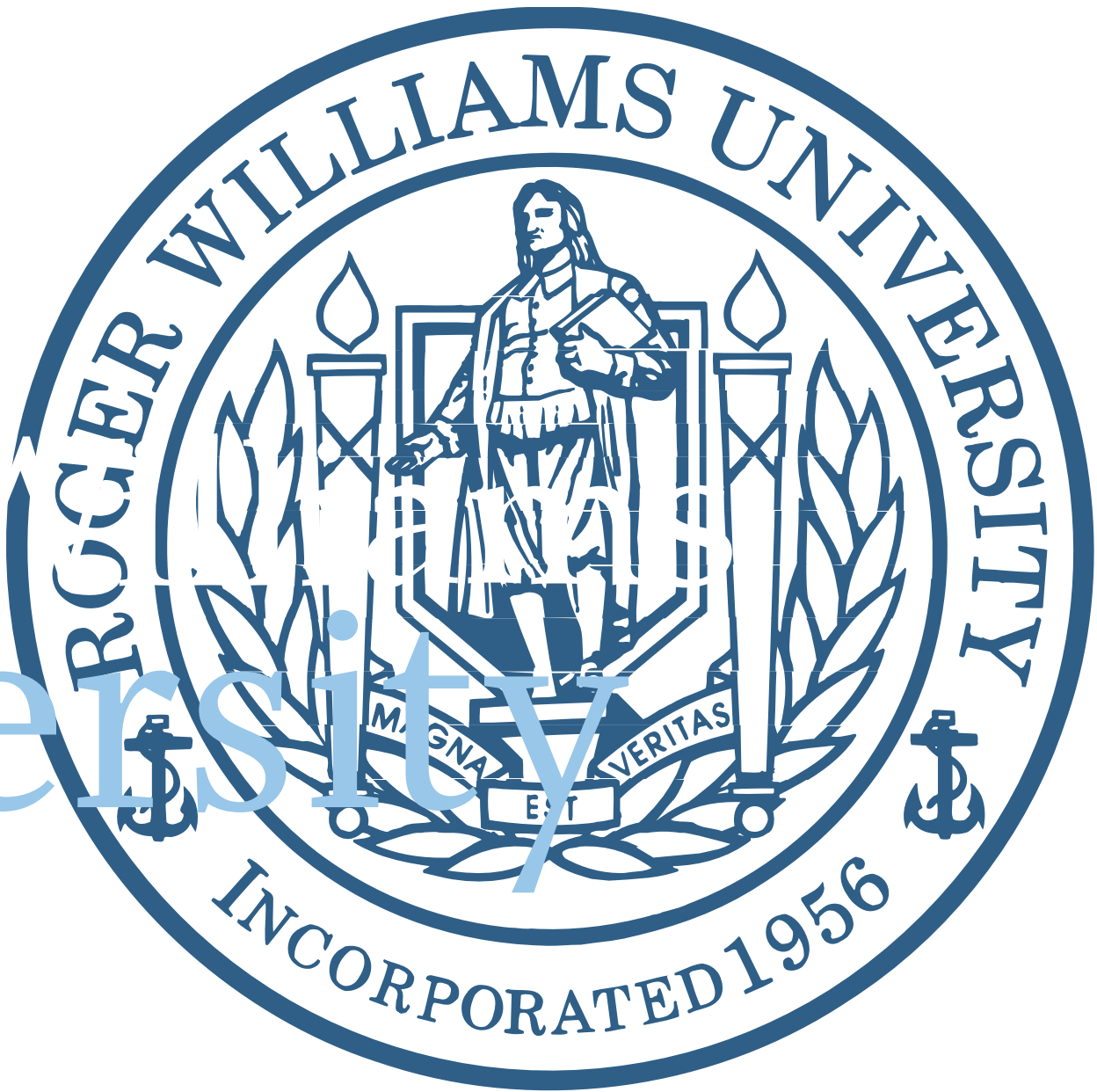
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