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Morris students study and prepare for science and math careers through the National Science Foundation's LSAMP program

Summary: The program seeks to increase the number of underrepresented students receiving undergraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math.

(October 19, 2011)-Fourteen Morris students are participating in the nationwide National Science Foundation's Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program through North Star STEM Alliance, which is comprised of 16 Minnesota higher education institutions and two community partners, the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Minnesota High Tech Association. The program seeks to increase the number of underrepresented students receiving undergraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. At Morris, that goal is being reached through mentorships, interdisciplinary studies, and creating a "culture of success."

Hilda Ladner, assistant to the chancellor for equity and diversity and director of equity, diversity and intercultural programs, helps coordinate the program at Morris. Engin Sungur, professor of statistics and program adviser, oversees the interdisciplinary course required for all Morris North Star students. Nancy Carpenter, professor of chemistry, is also a faculty adviser for the program. "This program breaks down barriers to success," she says. "The student get to know the science and math faculty, and they learn that faculty members are here to support and help them reach their goals."

In addition to faculty mentoring, especially involvement in summer research projects, the program also emphasizes peer mentoring. Students enter the program as North Star STEM Alliance "scholars" and are partnered with a student "fellow" who has experience in the program. In addition to providing advice and encouragement, the fellows are visible models of confidence and academic success in the sciences and math.

Chosen to serve as fellows for the 2011–12 academic year are Tiwa Ajibewa '14, St. Paul, biology and French major Abdala Bashir '14, St. Paul, chemistry: biochemistry major and biology minor student coordinator Melissa Carnicle '13, Garretson, South Dakota, chemistry and geology majors, environmental studies and physics minors Kali Dale '14, Bemidji, chemistry: biochemistry major and math minor and Kelsey Scareshawk '14, Shakopee, geology major.

Chosen as scholars for the 2011–12 academic year are Madison Anderson '13, Circle Pines, biology major and American Indian studies minor Julie Bonham '14, Eagan, biology/pre-dentistry major Gwendorlene Chea '15, Fridley, biology/pre-pharmacy major Julie Hernandez '16, El Paso, Texas, biology/pre-medicine major Kristin Hernandez '15, Chanhassen, biology major Olivia Kunesh '16, St. Paul, pre-nursing major Jeryca Martell '16, Bemidji, chemistry/pre-medicine major Jennifer Martinez '16, Chicago, Illinois, biology and anthropology majors Natasha Myhal '15, Cleveland, Ohio, biology and political science majors.

Carpenter states that the program employs a "solid approach" that begins with a foundation of time management and study skills training, tutoring, introductions to science and math careers, and networking with fellow students, faculty, and professionals in science and math careers. In addition, notes Sungur, the students develop skills to carry out undergraduate research in math and science, learn about undergraduate research and other academic opportunities

available, and learn how to connect with faculty to carry out undergraduate research.

In October 2011, the Morris students scholars and fellows attended a Kick-Off at TCF Bank Stadium with fellow Minnesota North Star STEM Alliance students. The evening included current students sharing research, internship, study abroad, professional conferences, and organization experiences. Industry professionals and graduate students also shared their post-undergraduate experiences and offered encouragement.

The National Science Foundation's LSAMP program provides funding for alliances and knowledge generation activities in broadening participation in STEM education related to retention and persistence of students from underrepresented populations in STEM majors and careers. The program assists universities and colleges in diversifying the STEM workforce through efforts to increase the numbers of students successfully completing high quality degree programs in STEM disciplines. Emphasis is placed on transforming STEM education through innovative recruitment and retention strategies and experiences in support of groups that historically are underrepresented in STEM disciplines: African-Americans, Alaskan Natives, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Pacific Islanders. The knowledge generation portfolio contributes to an understanding of successful practices in student recruitment, retention, persistence, and attainment of STEM undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Bottom row from left: Jennifer Martinez, Natasha Myhal, Kali Dale, Melissa Carnicle, middle row: Kristin Hernandez, Julie Bonham, Gwendorlene Chea, Madison Anderson, back row: Tiwa Ajibewa, Abdala Bashir, Kelsey Scareshawk, Julie Hernandez, not pictured: Olivia Kunesh, Jeryca Martell

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.