1-25-2023

**UMN Morris Included in $60 Million HHMI Grant**

Communications and Marketing

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The University of Minnesota Morris is one of 104 colleges and universities from throughout the U.S. that will receive a six-year grant through the Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s (HHMI) Inclusive Excellence (IE3) initiative.

This grant challenges US colleges and universities to substantially and sustainably build capacity for student belonging, especially for those who have been historically excluded from the sciences. The IE3 grants total more than $60 million over six years and are a part of HHMI’s national portfolio of experiments aimed at improving the introductory undergraduate science experience.

In preparing their IE3 pre-proposals, each school picked one of three broad challenges to address:

1. How can we make the content of the introductory science experience more inclusive?
2. How can we evaluate effective inclusive teaching, and then use the evaluation in the rewards system, including faculty promotion and tenure?
3. How can we create genuine partnerships between 2- and 4-year colleges and universities so that transfer students have a more inclusive experience?

UMN Morris is addressing the first challenge.

Associate Professor of Biology Heather Waye is leading the IE3 efforts at Morris, along with colleagues Rachel Johnson, Shaina Philpot, Barry McQuarrie, and Kerri Barnstuble.

“Our goal is to find the barriers that STEM students are facing and figure out how to tackle them,” Waye said. “This is an opportunity for us to change the system, not the student, so that the benefit of the grant will last beyond the scope of the grant.”

One of the first goals is to establish a Quantitative Learning Center (QLC) on campus, a dedicated space where students can build their quantitative skills with technologies used in their STEM classes. Waye stressed that student input is a key part of planning for this. In addition to providing practical help, the QLC would help students feel supported, valued and confident in their STEM abilities.
Collaboration is the organizing principle of IE3. The HHMI team has implemented a new strategy to reinforce and catalyze learning and sharing—grouping the 104 schools into seven Learning Community Clusters, or LCCs, with each LCC comprising approximately 15 schools.

Waye said that it’s unusual for a grant to be inclusive in its funding, rather than competitive between institutions. She says that the colleges have been collaborating for two years, mostly through Zoom meetings.

Johnson says the grant will also positively impact the academic environment for faculty members by providing an opportunity to work with others in the same field and benefit from the expertise and support of all involved.

UMN Morris is grouped with Elon University, Fairfield University, Fisk University, Fort Lewis College, Hamilton College (New York), Oglethorpe University, Otterbein University, Portland State University, Simmons University, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Iowa, University of New Mexico-Main Campus, and Xavier University (Ohio).