



# News Release

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## WESTERN RECEIVES \$117,111 GRANT

**St. Joseph, Mo.** — March 2, 2004 — Students in science classes at several northwest Missouri high schools and middle schools will benefit from a \$117,111 grant received by Missouri Western State College from the Missouri Department of Higher Education. The grant will fund a two-week workshop at Western this summer for up to 13 area science teachers along with laboratory equipment for each school involved in the workshop.

The schools' eligibility to participate is based on their students' MAP scores in science. Dr. John Rushin, professor of biology and one of the coordinators of the workshop, said the two weeks will be spent developing programs, labs and various investigative programs to help students learn about science processes and the elements of scientific investigation. The workshop will focus on improving students' engagement and helping them perform better in the science classroom and on MAP tests.

Data-gathering instrumentation will be purchased for the workshop and then given to the participating schools so teachers can test the ideas and experiments during the school year. The workshop participants will meet four times throughout the school year to evaluate the program.

"I'm excited and enthusiastic, and I am looking forward to a good experience," Dr. Rushin said. "We think we can cause a very positive effect on these schools."

Four Western professors and a teacher from the St. Joseph School District will facilitate the workshop: Dr. Michael Ottinger, assistant professor of physics and co- director of the grant project; Dr. David Ashley, professor of biology; Dr. Victoria "Y" Wacek, assistant professor of education; and Jay Meyers, biology and science research teacher at Central High School and high school science coordinator for the district. Dr. Martin Johnson, dean of the school of liberal arts and sciences, is the principal investigator of the grant.

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**Page 2 of 2 – Science grant**

Dr. Rushin noted that the workshop format will be an expansion of the college's learning communities initiative. Participants will not only learn about the concept but experience it in the workshop. He said instead of the typical workshop lecture format, "we're going to put all our ideas together and share them, and work with the teachers to develop activities."

Dr. Johnson said he hopes workshop participants will carry the Learning Communities concept back to their classrooms because learning communities improve the quality of instruction. "In a learning community, students have to be actively involved in the learning process, which creates greater engagement and greater learning."

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.