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Six projects receive IDEA grant funding

by staff | **December 18, 2014**

The William & Mary [Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity](#) recently awarded funding to six projects proposed by faculty, staff and students to help advance campus diversity efforts.

The recipients of the Innovative Diversity Efforts Awards (IDEA) will use the grants to support a variety of endeavors, ranging from outreach to K-12 and community college students to the revitalization of the Mason Diversity Ambassadors program.

“We are excited to be able to fund six diversity initiative proposals this year,” said Chon Glover, chief diversity office for the university. “I look forward to seeing the work that will be accomplished with the execution of the grants.”

The projects funded this year are:

Fill the Gap: Filling a Pipeline Gap to our Next Generation of Scientists & Engineers

Amy Wilkerson, Laboratory and Research Manager, [Applied Research Center](#)

This project aims to introduce K-12 students at the Boys & Girls Club of Suffolk to science and engineering principles by giving them hands-on experience with a 3D printer.

The students in the Boys & Girls Club of Suffolk’s after-school enrichment program will receive hands-on experience with an instructor to learn about the printing process and will participate in discussions about structural design and material properties.

“Because the 3D printer is designed to start working out of the box, I plan for the students to get hands-on experience quickly,” said Wilkerson. “This experience will hopefully improve the students’ spatial reasoning skills and introduce them to engineering concepts such as material and structural strength.”

According to the grant proposal, many of the rural after-school programs within a 50-mile radius of William & Mary do not have the funding to offer students opportunities others have in more metropolitan areas.

“By reaching out into rural communities, we can inspire children to pursue a life they have only seen on a CSI TV show,” Wilkerson says in the proposal. “I want these children to know that we are here. I want to expose them to ‘my’ wonderful world of materials characterization. My vision ... is just a baby step in the pipeline to a more diverse campus, but it can be a pivotal point in just one young mind.”



Students wear T-shirts as part of the Pressures of Perfection project, which was sponsored by an IDEA grant.

Increasing Faculty Awareness and Appreciation of Diversity: A Workshop to Enhance Advising Practices and Teaching of the New Curriculum

Therese Lovegreen, Director, Office of Academic Advising

Through this project, Lovegreen hopes to provide faculty with: a chance to build their understanding and awareness of diversity principles, knowledge of the current issues and concerns faced by various populations on campus, an opportunity to discuss the value of diversity and a chance to explore pedagogies that may deepen students' appreciation of diversity.

In order to meet those objectives, a workshop featuring a guest speaker will be offered to faculty mid-April. In addition to the speaker, the workshop will include analysis of the W&M diversity statement, group activities and discussions and an opportunity for individual reflection. The workshop will be timed to coincide with other efforts to prepare faculty to implement the new COLL curriculum.

"Faculty will have the opportunity to discuss and explore how their teaching of new curriculum is intended to deepen students' knowledge and appreciation of the value of diversity," Lovegreen says in the proposal.

Mason Diversity Ambassadors

Giana Castellanos '16

With her grant, Castellanos is looking to reestablish the Mason Diversity Ambassadors program at the Raymond A. Mason School of Business. The program seeks to promote diversity within the business school, provide networking opportunities for all students interested in business, and build relationships with other schools to help bring William & Mary closer to its diversity goals.

Some of the programs that the re-established program hopes to sponsor include speaker panels, a high-school outreach program and a diversity case competition, which would bring together a diverse group of students from other universities.

"The Mason Diversity Ambassadors aim to ensure an increase in recruitment, retention, matriculation and job placement of underrepresented minorities," Castellanos says in the proposal. "Through the demonstration of the meaningful impact diversity can have on students' business education, we will not only be enforcing diversity within the business school but on the campus as a whole."

Outreach to Northern Virginia Community College

Adam Anthony, Director of the W&M Washington Office; Whitney Link, Undergraduate Admission

Northern Virginia Community College is the largest educational institution in Virginia and has a large number of international students in its population. This project will create opportunities for William & Mary to reach out to students at NVCC.

"Our IDEA grant will support a partnership between the W&M Washington Office and the Office of Admissions to create opportunities to reach out to students at Northern Virginia Community College to encourage them to engage in academic opportunities at William & Mary," said Anthony. "With 75,000 students, NVCC describes itself as 'one of the most internationally diverse colleges in the United States, with a student body consisting of individuals from

more than 180 countries.”

The Washington Office plans to reach the NVCC students by hosting two summer classes at the college in Arlington. William & Mary will also reach out to students in the NVCC Honors Program through opportunities such as a dinner for first-year honors students and parents.

“The dinner would serve as a magnet to attract students to hear the presentation, but also serve as a way to capture the student’s time and attention, and to demonstrate an interest in encouraging NVCC students to transfer that the College,” said Anthony.

Pressures of Perfection

Meghan Schilken '18

With her grant, Schilken conducted a live performance to promote understanding of the pressures put upon women -- both externally and internally -- to be perfect. It started as a final project for her World Performing Arts for Social Change freshman seminar, taught by Class of 2015 Associate Professor of Theatre and Africana Studies Francis Tanglao-Aguas, and turned into a live, campus-wide performance for social change.

“Through this piece, I hope to explain and coerce people to recognize that perfection is an unachievable goal that should not be place upon a young woman as an expectation and that our culture needs to reevaluate what standard are necessary and healthy to hold you women to,” Schilken said in the proposal.

To accomplish this goal, Schilken created T-shirts that included, on the front, the main statistic of her project, “1 in 4 teenage girls are in danger of self-destructive behaviors.” On the back, one of the self-destructive behaviors, such as eating disorders and depression, was listed. The shirts were worn by women on the W&M campus Dec. 7-11, during which time each wearer of the shirt was asked to give a brief statement about what the project meant to them, or how it had affected them. The participants posted these comments with a photo of themselves on Instagram ([@thePerfectionProblem](#)) and Twitter ([@1in4Perfect](#)) as part of the project’s social media campaign. Additionally, each wearer was charged with presenting the shirt to another woman on campus whom they believed needed to learn and hear about the “Perfection Problem.”

“By having women wear the shirts around campus, not only will they be quite physically bearing the burdens of their afflictions, but others, too will hopefully look up and recognize the realities that are caused by creating unachievable standards,” the proposal states.

Reinforcing Diversity Awareness as an Orientation Leader Core Competency

Mary Beth Berg '15, Graduate Student Zara Sibtain and Director of First Year Experience Lauren Garrett

Student staff members with the university’s orientation program are some of the first representatives of William & Mary that new students meet when they arrive on campus. This IDEA grant will allow the orientation program to expand diversity training for those staff members.

“It is vital that we set a positive precedence for each individual we come in contact with right from the start,” the project proposal states. “For many, that means being mindful to our differences.”

With funding from the grant, a diversity awareness speaker will added to the training for student leaders. Although

the students already receive some diversity training, the orientation program leaders believe that more is needed.

“As an orientation staff, we are trying to achieve the depth of personal perspective and experience to make true empathy and awareness a consistent part of our staff makeup,” the proposal says.

IDEA grants are awarded annually and are made possible through the university’s diversity endowment, said Glover.

“Please consider applying next year if you have an innovative idea,” she said.

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