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By Dave Groves, staff writer

Starting next summer and continuing for three years, Oakland University will recruit 30 science, technology, engineering and mathematics professionals interested in putting their knowledge and experience to work in high school classrooms.

Thanks to an \$893,000 grant provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and administered by the National Science Foundation's Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program, 10 students per year will be able to enroll in OU's Master of Arts in Teaching program with their tuition and other expenses covered.

"I think this is a good example of how stimulus dollars are being spent to help people in a number of ways," said Mark Olson, an assistant professor of education and one of three university directors of the scholarship program.

Not only will the grant provide new career opportunities for highly-skilled professionals, including those who have been displaced by Michigan's troubled economy, but it will also help children and communities as a whole by improving the quality of math and science education in the state.

"This is the kind of crucial knowledge people are going to need in order for our region to recover and continue to develop economically," Olson explained.

Teacher training also will help address a shortage of secondary math and science teachers in Michigan schools.

"There are folks interested in teaching these subjects, but there just haven't been enough of them," explained Jerrold Grossman, an OU professor of mathematics and statistics. "This program certainly will make sure these are highly qualified educators in the math and science areas."

The grant comes as result of a partnership between OU's School of Education and Human Services, the school's Office of Professional Development and the College of Arts and Sciences. Through continued coordination, the existing Masters of Arts in Teaching program at OU is being expanded to include a specialization in math and science.

"This is going to help us focus very specifically on the instruction methodology for people in this content area," said Christine Abbott, a special lecturer in the Teacher Development and Educational Studies Department. "This is a high-need area. The grant is giving us an opportunity to give people a chance to make a career change that will really put them in demand."

Noyce Scholarship recipients will be able to complete their studies, a practicum and student teaching requirements in just 12 months. As a result, the first cohort will receive certification and be able to begin teaching by the fall of 2011.

To further enhance the preparation of high-quality teachers, Oakland has partnered with the Avondale, Hazel Park and Oak Park school districts, which will make exemplary teaching staff available to serve as teaching mentors for two years after students have earned their certificates and begun teaching.

"Preparing a teacher is really a partnership between the school district and the university," Olson said. "We see this as quite an important part of the program. We're going to provide support throughout those first two years."

In exchange for accepting the scholarship, recipients will be required to teach in high-need districts for at least two years. At the same time, the grant provides opportunity to purchase equipment designed to help teachers improve instruction in those classrooms.

Abbott said she expects that there will be great demand for the scholarship opportunities and that program administrators will look to enroll highly qualified and motivated applicants.

"There's the academic side of it, but it's also about identifying people who are going to be passionate about working with students," she said.

To learn more about the Master of Arts in Teaching program and the Noyce Scholarship opportunity, visit the SEHS Office of Professional Development Web site, call (248) 370-4192 or e-mail reed@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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