



SC ATE Center of Excellence
Florence-Darlington Technical College
SiMT Room 257 ● P.O. Box 100548
2715 W. Lucas Street, Florence, SC 29501-0548
mentorconnect@fdtc.edu | www.mentor-connect.org

For Immediate Release

June 18, 2018

National Science Foundation Project at FDTC to Help Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges Nationally

Florence, S.C. – [Florence-Darlington Technical College \(FDTC\)](http://www.fdtc.edu), in partnership with [Science Foundation Arizona \(SFAz\)](http://www.sfaaz.edu), has received funding from the [National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education program \(NSF ATE\)](http://www.nsf.gov) to assist community college Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) nationally.

This \$584,274 grant award enables the partnering organizations to implement interventions they have each developed to improve the success rate of community college HSIs when they seek grant funding from NSF ATE.

The interventions that have been developed by the [FDTC Mentor-Connect project](http://www.fdtc.edu) and the [SFAz Kickstarter project](http://www.sfaaz.edu)—both funded by NSF—increase the capacity of colleges to implement improvements in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, with a particular emphasis on programs that produce highly skilled technicians in fields of advanced technology that drive the US economy.

Elaine Craft, principal investigator for two Mentor-Connect grants awarded to FDTC, will lead this initiative for FDTC with Rick Roberts, assistant director of the [South Carolina Advanced Technological Education \(SCATE\) Center of Excellence](http://www.scaate.edu) and Emery DeWitt, Mentor-Connect program manager serving as co-principal investigators. Caroline VanIngen-Dunn, director of Community College STEM Pathways at Science Foundation Arizona, and principal investigator for the Kickstarter grant awarded to SFAz, will lead the SFAz component of the project.

“We are thrilled to partner with SFAz to leverage successful strategies that reach and support more community college HSIs,” Craft said.

“The value that the ATE program has brought to two-year colleges will be strengthened with a specific commitment to identify HSI two-year colleges whose STEM strategic plans developed through the KickStarter program align with the merits of ATE,” VanIngen-Dunn said.

To date, Mentor-Connect and Kickstarter have separately assisted 45 HSIs in nine states. Those institutions range in size from 400 to 40,000 students and have Hispanic enrollments ranging from 27% to 97%.

This HSI ATE Hub research project will implement a two-step intervention for HSIs: Colleges that have developed STEM program improvement plans through Kickstarter’s comprehensive technical assistance process will transfer to Mentor-Connect when they identify ATE as their program of choice. Mentor-Connect will then provide mentoring and technical support to guide HSI faculty and staff members through the ATE

grant development funding process. Throughout, there will be an emphasis on providing culturally competent practices and resources that are critical for the success of underrepresented college students.

This year faculty and staff from Phoenix College, one of 18 HSIs in five states that have participated in KickStarter, became involved in Mentor-Connect as a pilot test of the concepts included in this new collaborative project. Since 2013, Mentor-Connect has served 120 colleges; funding rates for participants submitting small grants for institutions new to ATE is 70%.

Community and technical colleges are the main sources of technician education in the United States. Workforce demand for highly skilled technicians will be addressed through the HSI ATE Hub project by developing resources that strengthen the capacity of the growing number of two-year college HSIs. The project will also explore research questions about the challenges HSIs encounter as they develop their STEM programs, the characteristics of colleges that receive grants, and the processes of Mentor-Connect and KickStarter that are most efficacious.

About Mentor-Connect:

Mentor-Connect: A Leadership Development and Outreach Initiative for ATE is an initiative of the South Carolina Advanced Technological Education Center of Excellence (SCATE) at Florence-Darlington Technical College designed to engage more two-year technical and community colleges in the improvement of technician education. Mentor-Connect works in partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to help STEM faculty teams from participating institutions apply for grant funding from the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education program (NSF ATE). Mentor-Connect participants are assisted in developing grant-writing skills and leadership skills by mentors with many years of experience with NSF ATE funded projects. It is funded through NSF grant numbers 1204463 and 1501183.

About SCATE:

SCATE, a National ATE Center for Expanding Excellence in Technician Education since 1994, is a well established and widely connected NSF-funded initiative housed at Florence-Darlington Technical College. Its resources support the development of a highly skilled technician workforce in engineering, manufacturing, and industrial technologies via faculty development and mentoring, problem-based learning, research, evaluation, and student scholarships and internships. SCATE provides the nation's only online service that proactively connects educators to relevant professional development. For more information see SCATE websites: www.scate.org, www.TeachingTechnicians.org, and www.Mentor-Connect.org.

About Science Foundation Arizona:

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2006 by Arizona's industry leadership groups with support from the executive and legislative branches of state government. SFAz has since helped institutions of many sizes and types capitalize on the promise of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education to advance human talent and economic opportunity. SFAz has an array of proven STEM Success services in analysis, strategic planning, implementation, and sustainability, helping institutions achieve success in these important STEM areas impacting workforce preparedness and economic growth. With funding from NSF for its KickStarter program (1450661), SFAz is assisting 18 Hispanic-serving community colleges across five states in their strategic planning that has led to a 44% NSF proposal award rate and \$2.4M in funding.

###