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Modesto district receives big grant

Stan State, UC Berkeley also share \$3.3M to keep good educators in the area

By KRISTINA SEWARD

BEE STAFF WRITER

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A \$3.3 million grant will help keep better teachers in Modesto's struggling schools.

California State University, Stanislaus, the University of California at Berkeley and Modesto City Schools are the joint recipients of a Teacher Quality Recruitment Grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

The money will be used to prepare future teachers for assignments at high-needs schools, said Annela Teeman, managing director of UC Berkeley's Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, or CREDE.

High-needs schools, Teeman said, generally have large groups of students who are English-learners or who come from diverse backgrounds.

"There is typically a high burnout rate of teachers in high-needs schools," Teeman said. "They don't feel they have the support they need or the skills they need, and this program will provide that. It's one way to make sure teachers who start in the profession continue past the first year."

The program's mission is threefold:

First, it will prepare liberal studies students at Stanislaus State to teach math, science and technology, using CREDE's instructional model. Seventyfive students are expected to participate over the next three years.

Second, participating Stanislaus State faculty will apply the instructional model to their courses.

And third, about 25 teachers from five sites in the Modesto City Schools district will receive training on the same model.

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What the program will entail locally has to be determined.

Modesto City Schools still is in the planning phases, said Carol Ligon, director of curriculum and staff development, and has not identified which schools or teachers will participate.

Stanislaus State President Hamid Shirvani said he is delighted the university received the grant.

Shirvani said there are many schools in the Northern San Joaquin Valley that are struggling, and at the majority of these schools, the students have trouble mastering English.

His hope is that graduates of Stanislaus State's credential program will remain in the community as teachers at these schools.


"(This grant) will encourage our students to go through spe-cific training so they can be prepared to teach at these needy schools, and they can help to improve the situation," Shirvani said.

Joan Wink, a teacher education professor at Stanislaus State, said another aspect of the program is providing students with a seamless transition between their undergraduate education, the credential program and their induction into the profession.

Wink said the long-term plan is for Modesto City Schools teachers and Stanislaus State faculty who participate in the program to form a support system for new teachers.

"Anything we can do to support beginning teachers," she said, "and anything we can do to make them more successful is certainly worth our time."

Bee staff writer Kristina Seward can be reached at 578-2235 or kseward@modbee.com.

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