

How can we bring high-quality teacher preparation to rural areas?

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iTeachAZ, Gila Valley

Principal investigator:

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Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold

Direct sponsor:

ASU Foundation

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The challenge:

How can we make the high-quality teacher preparation programs offered by Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College available in rural areas, such as the Gila Valley, and increase the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) teachers in the region?

The goal is to increase the number of teachers prepared outside of Arizona's Maricopa and Pinal counties in high-need secondary subject areas including science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The geographic focus is the Gila Valley.

This issue is significant due to anticipated teacher shortages. By 2018, 24 percent of current Arizona teachers will be eligible to retire. Furthermore, teacher retention is a challenge in Arizona because only 76 percent of teachers remain in the profession after three years. Another contributing factor to the importance of this research is a shortage of STEM teachers. This shortage is reported by many agencies, including the Business-Higher Education Forum, which projected

the U.S. will need more than 280,000 new mathematics and science teachers by 2015. There is also a shortage of four-year education programs in rural areas in Arizona. This project targets students who are natives of the local community and who plan to remain in that area to teach.

The approach:

The project team is building community awareness of the secondary education program and the need for more quality teachers. Outreach efforts include information sessions at community fairs, college and career day events; presentations at Eastern Arizona College classes; presentations and flyers at high schools and in newspapers; and targeted events such as an outreach forum with Arizona's state historian, Marshall Trimble.

The team is developing a partnership with the community college by streamlining course requirements. For example, students can take courses at the local community college for their four-year teaching degree. ASU faculty are full-time EAC faculty members and are present on the local community college campus at least three days per week. ASU faculty teach the majority of the courses offered in the program and meet with community members and stakeholders two days per week. The team is developing common syllabuses for program integrity, so students on the local campus experience the same rigor and expectations as those in the Phoenix area. The project team is maintaining ongoing communication between stakeholders and implementing recruitment events.

Findings and impact:

The study is ongoing, and results are not yet available.




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