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### UM to participate in \$6 million grant for training new teachers

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# The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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March 24, 1993

## UM TO PARTICIPATE IN \$6 MILLION GRANT FOR TRAINING NEW TEACHERS

MISSOULA --

The University of Montana is joining with Montana State University and eight Montana colleges and community colleges to develop more effective ways to train mathematics and science teachers under a \$6 million, five-year grant from the National Science Foundation.

The Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation Project, based at MSU, is one of three successful applicants for the NSF funding among 37 contenders nationwide.

The STEP Project aims to improve the future teaching of science and mathematics by revitalizing the way those subjects are taught to teachers, UM mathematics Professor Rick Billstein said.

"Teachers tend to teach as they are taught, not as they are taught to teach," Billstein said. "So we are remodeling our classes to be taught in the way we want these teachers to teach."

Since most college-level courses rely heavily on lectures and textbooks, the future teachers who take those courses go on to use those techniques in their schools, where they are largely ineffective, Billstein said. Under STEP, he said, courses commonly taken by teachers will be revamped to become much more interactive and innovative, using techniques that relate to students' lives and draw them into the subject matter.

MSU and UM will each overhaul 14 of their science, math and education courses, he said, and Eastern, Northern and Western Montana Colleges will each revamp seven courses.

UM will receive several hundred thousand dollars of the STEP funding, he said. The three site directors for UM's share of the grant are Billstein, biological sciences Professor Lee Metzgar and Ralph

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Allen, an assistant professor of professional education.

One of the project's goals is to increase the number of Native Americans who teach mathematics and science, Billstein said. Five of Montana's tribal colleges -- Salish Kootenai College, Blackfeet Community College, Fort Belknap College, Fort Peck Community College and Little Bighorn College -- are partners in the grant.

Other key components of STEP include: development of teams of expert mathematicians, scientists and public school teachers to train new teachers in creative classroom strategies; establishment of six model schools throughout the state where college students can view and practice new teaching methods; a mentor program to reduce the dropout rate of beginning teachers; and an emphasis on classroom methods that will encourage female students to excel in science and math.

UM is already participating in two major NSF-funded projects to improve the teaching of math and science: a \$9.9 million statewide grant to develop a new high school math and science curriculum for Montana; and a \$3.8 million grant awarded to UM to develop a model middle-school math curriculum for the nation. Those curriculum-development projects helped Montana secure the STEP grant, which will train teachers to teach the new curricula, Billstein said.

The new grant solidifies Montana's position as a national leader in math and science teaching and curriculum development, he said.

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