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Science Foundation Arizona Launches Pilot STEM Mentoring Program with Individual Grants Being Awarded in Flagstaff, Tucson and Phoenix

Three-Year Grant from Arizona Community Foundation to Fund Program that Connects STEM Partnerships between Businesses and Schools

PHOENIX (Dec. 10, 2012) – Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz), a nonprofit public-private partnership that serves as a catalyst for investments in research and education in Arizona while strengthening its economic future, today announced its new STEM Mentoring Program funded by a \$162,500 three-year grant from the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF).

The grant empowers SFAz to bring together businesses, educators and community leaders in Flagstaff, Tucson and Phoenix to connect scientists, engineers and researchers with 4th- through 12th-grade teachers to develop relevant STEM education experiences. In the program's first year, SFAz expects to impact 45 teachers, 45 mentors and 1,725 students across three regions.

The ACF grant programs will be managed by SFAz staff to ensure effective progress before awarding second- and third-year funding. The investment is a pilot program to explore the most effective way to engage businesses and communities in STEM education. The program is part of SFAz's efforts to build the Arizona STEM Network.

"With a strong focus on quality education in Arizona, the Arizona Community Foundation is thrilled to partner with Science Foundation Arizona on this exciting initiative," said Steven G. Seleznow, ACF's president and CEO. "STEM education is critically important to the future of our children and is integral to our state's competitiveness in the 21st-Century global economy. We believe strategic partnerships that support innovative approaches around STEM education such as this one are among the most effective investments we can make in securing that strong future. We are proud to play a role in driving this program forward."

In Northern Arizona, the existing program, Flagstaff STEM Connections, will be awarded a grant of \$25,000 in the first year for a pilot focused on teaming up 15 Flagstaff Unified School District teachers with 15 faculty members from the NAU Center for Science Teaching and Learning. Initially, the program will be a collaborative effort between select teachers from Mt. Elden Middle School and Sinagua Middle School, NAU, Flagstaff 40, T-Gen North and the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, with guidance from SFAz. The new funding will be used to determine the current state of genomics science and age-

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appropriate DNA/genetics curriculum needs, and to jointly design a genomics-based educational experience for middle school students that can be replicated in classrooms.

In Southern Arizona, Blue Marble Institute's Tucson Champions for Change will be awarded a grant of \$20,000 for the first year. Known as C4C, the program is a community partnership with the Tucson Unified School District, Tucson Values Teachers, Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. With SFAz's assistance, this new funding will allow more small- to mid-sized businesses to develop close working relationships between teachers and students focused around work-related projects connected to the curriculum. The goal is to provide easily recognizable, real-life applications for students, and support further STEM content development of teachers. Teachers will be selected from cohorts of teacher alumni of the Biosphere 2 ACST program and the MASTER-IP industry internship program. STEM classroom leadership is stressed, as is college and career readiness. Projects are multidisciplinary and linked to Common Core standards and science content areas emerging from next-generation science standards. A pilot has been tested in five schools and with five companies. With the new funding, the program will expand to include 20 more school/business partnerships. Current participating businesses include Universal Avionics, Trisports, Vantage West, Crest Insurance and Coventry Health Care.

In the Phoenix area, the Discovery Triangle Community College Partnership has been awarded a \$5,000 grant for low-cost pilot testing of a model for teaming community college students—an underutilized yet significant source of science and engineering skills—with participating schools. Participants include 20 'pre-service' teachers from Rio Salado College. These teachers include National Science Foundation Noyce Scholars (re-careering industry experts with strong backgrounds in STEM who are choosing to teach 7th to 12th grade), NSF S-STEM Scholars (academically-talented, financially needy students on track to enter the work force or move on to advanced training and education with associate degrees and high school diplomas) and STEM Honors students. The three groups will build in-service and pre-service STEM teams with teachers in the targeted Discovery Triangle economic district, where most schools are under-supported, intellectually limited and STEM-deprived Title I schools in South Scottsdale and Central Phoenix.

"This funding from Arizona Community Foundation is crucial to helping us connect and implement effective partnerships between businesses and schools to provide practical, project-based learning for students in classrooms," said Dr. Len Fine of Science Foundation Arizona. "We're looking forward to a successful first year of this program and expanding these STEM best practices to additional schools around the state."

About Science Foundation Arizona

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty in conjunction with the executive and legislative branches of state government. SFAz serves as a catalyst for high-wage, knowledge-based jobs and economic diversity through administration and strict oversight of research, development and education grants to public education and other non-profit research performing institutions. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org.

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