

North Carolina A&T Wins Huge Science Grant

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\$18 million will fund important research

After competing for more than two years, North Carolina A&T has received not only the highest grant award possible for engineering, but it also has become the first HBCU to receive it.

A&T's School of Engineering was awarded an \$18 million Engineering Research Center from the National Science Foundation with a possible time length of 10 years.

"A&T is more than capable of surviving in the mainstream," Chancellor Stanley F. Battle said.

Battle explained how important it was for A&T to receive this type of recognition because of the efforts that were made to ensure improvements for the School of Engineering. The ERC is an opportunity to enable A&T's engineering school to make it one of the best. Professor of engineering Dr. Jag Sankar explained that many of the top engineering schools in the country have not yet received this award. The award is a very huge step for A&T and the community.

Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development, explained that only two other schools in the NC system has received the award, and those schools include NC State and Duke University.

"A&T presented an excellent proposal and received a lot of support from the community in supporting the proposal," Radhakrishnan said.

According to the university, A&T will continue its partnerships with the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Cincinnati in furthering their studies. New to the partnership is the Hanover School in Germany, which will also assist in the studies planned for the ERC.

The ERC at A&T will conduct research in biomedical engineering, including development of implants to aid craniofacial and orthopedic treatments and may help children born with birth defects or others with bone damage, the university stated in its announcement. The center will also study ways to improve cardiovascular devices such as stents.

"The same group has been working together as a family, and now we have the tools to continue to do so," Sankar said.

The materials in the implant will also be made to automatically dissolve into the bloodstream, and exit the body once it has performed its job.

Sankar explained that the research requires people of different backgrounds. Science, math, psychology, and other concentrations are needed to thoroughly complete the research for the study.

The research study will not only affect the school of engineering. The opportunities that will stem from the ERC will be open for all majors. A&T plans to create the first bio-engineering program in an HBCU. The program will help students to function in all types of engineering settings.

Entrepreneurship courses will be offered in the program to help push students to use their engineering backgrounds to become entrepreneurs. The research also hopes to create study-abroad opportunities for students to interact with some of the largest corporations in the world. The study abroad opportunities to the corporations will be open to all majors. The bio-engineering program will offer bachelors, masters, and Ph.D. programs for its students.

Sankar said they hope to get the program started soon. "Next year it will start and within three years the graduate program should up."

The ERC will also have a large effect on the Greensboro community. The amount of attention that the ERC will bring will make large industries develop in Greensboro which will bring more job opportunities.

"Big industries create more growth in those areas; more hotels, more restaurants, more jobs," Sankar said.

"This is huge," said Erskine Bowles, president of the North Carolina University System.

"An ERC can change a community."

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Ashley Reid writes for the A&T Register, which originally published a version of this article.