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Photo: From left to right - Dr. Douglas Howard, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Dr. Susan Barbaro, Associate Professor of Biology & Dept. Coordinator; and Sister Paula Marie Buley, IHM, Rivier's President



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Rivier University receives \$650,000 National Science Foundation STEM grant

The National Science Foundation has awarded Rivier's biology department a five-year, \$650,000 grant to support the education of young scientists. The grant will fund a pilot program titled ARGYLES (Attract, Retain and Graduate Young Life Scientists) to engage biology majors as emergent scientists who will contribute to the vitality of the STEM workforce in the Northeast. ARGYLES successes will be shared with peer institutions to encourage program adoption at other colleges and universities through conference presentations, news releases and peer-reviewed journals.

The ARGYLES program will provide four-year scholarships, and signature learning and professional experiences to academically talented students from lower-income families. Preference will be given to minority, female and first-generation learners, currently underrepresented in the STEM disciplines. Key program components include summer field study, peer and faculty mentoring, community building, independent research proposals and projects, travel to scientific conferences, and workforce preparation.

"This grant will not only assist current STEM students but also enable Rivier to expand a model for student engagement in other disciplines," says Sister Paula Marie Buley, IHM, Rivier's President.

“ARGYLES’ offers four pillars of support: academic, financial, vocational and communal. In addition, the focus on experiential learning will offer both a hands-on educational experience and build diversity within the scientific community.”

Program objectives establish a progression from campus to community to career for students. Goals include recruitment and enrollment of qualified students; building community within the ARGYLES cohort and active participation in campus life and the Greater Nashua community; increased retention and graduation rates; and continuation to STEM graduate study or employment in their field within six months of graduation.

Rivier’s commitment to global engagement and career preparation fosters a broader experience: ARGYLES students, peer mentors, and faculty will travel to Canada for a two-week research and cultural exchange. While hiking along the Niagara Escarpment, students will be introduced to the geology and flora of the region and will gain hands-on experience testing water retrieved from various locations that extend from Niagara Falls to Georgian Bay. The expedition will also provide students the opportunity to establish professional connections with international science students.

“We’re excited for this opportunity to grow Rivier’s biology and biotech programs,” says Dr. Susan Barbaro, Associate Professor of Biology, Department Coordinator and the grant’s author. “We have already established a partnership with faculty and staff at the University of Waterloo in Ontario as we plan for the community-building teaching trip abroad.”

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Student recruitment for the program begins immediately. Learning community formation and activities will take place before the fall 2017 semester. Interested parties should contact Rivier’s Office of Undergraduate Admissions at (603) 897-8507 or admissions@rivier.edu.

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