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University Park, IL,
November
10,
2020

GEER Grant to Provide Language and 'Gateway' Math Skills



Governors State University (GSU) will offer intensive English training, computer literacy, and foundational math classes through a \$456,000 state grant to help recruit and retain students hardest hit during the COVID-19 crisis.

One of nine schools to receive a competitive grant through the Illinois Board of Higher Education Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, Governors State will create the Intensive English, Digital Literacy and Math Intervention Project to support nearly 200 new and existing Governors State students with language and math instruction.

The GEER grant, funded through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, seeks to support universities' efforts to enroll and retain

postsecondary low-income, underrepresented, and first-generation students, who might otherwise not enroll or return due to the pandemic.

Governors State President Cheryl Green said the university is grateful for the GEER grant to support students with language and math skills, which are critical to academic success. "This grant will empower Governors State University to continue to provide resources that will assist us in advancing our mission to promote persistence in degree completion while removing barriers to progression into upper division courses," she said.



Up to 30 community members will be recruited for free intensive English language classes that will start January 11, 2021. The program will also retain up to 160 additional students who need math supports to “stay the course” with their academic studies.

The two-semester (300-hour) Intensive English and Digital Literacy training will be offered through the **School of Extended Learning** and will include vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies, and other language skills.

In an important time when a growing number of students are learning online, participants will receive assistance with web navigation, Microsoft Office, email, and other computer programs necessary for academic and career success. Participants will also learn the Blackboard Learning Management System. To ensure digital equity, lessons come with a laptop that participants get to keep and Wi-Fi access for the duration of the grant program.



The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) will create a new math course to help students prepare for college-level math. The one-credit, hands-on Statistics course will offer 30 focused hours of math practice in a lab-format.

The lab will focus on activity-based assignments, student discourse and student led-presentations, including academic and mathematics language and literacy. A unique aspect of the program will offer students the opportunity to focus on real life social justice issues by creating graphs to chart evidence of systemic racism and inequality.

“Advancing educational equity is our core goal,” said Sharon Morrissey, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the School of Extended Learning. “We believe English is the key to academic and career-readiness, and math provides critical thinking skills needed to problem-solve inside and outside the classroom. Our program helps to achieve both outcomes, while serving students from all populations, at a time when they need it most. It is our hope that participants apply their new skills in academic or career pursuits.”

Morrissey co-authored the GEER grant with CAS Dean Andrae Marak, who called mathematics a “gateway” to student success.

“The new interventions will help our largely first-generation students succeed in the classroom and achieve on-time graduation rates as Governors State University works to prepare the next generation of our region's leaders,” Dr. Marak said.

For more information on the Intensive English and computer training opportunity, visit our GEER [website](#), or email Akiko Ota, Director of the English Language Learning Center at aota@govst.edu.

Current Governors State students in need of math supports should contact Daniel Ferry, Coordinator of Tutoring and Academic Assistance in the Academic Resource Center, at dferry@govst.edu.