Trinity grant to help Latinos

Institute gift targets science programs

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A recently awarded $1.5 million grant to Trinity University will allow the university to target underrepresented groups, including Latino students, in science fields with educational programs.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant will be given to the university over four years for programs to serve students and educators.

Through a partnership with the San Antonio Independent School District, Trinity’s science programs will focus on giving Trinity students and faculty more opportunities as well as for outreach programs for underrepresented students and teachers.

The outreach programs will be for middle school SAISD students, and teachers who instruct all grades.

“The whole goal isn’t to get students to come to Trinity, but to go on to college and to be science majors. We have a pretty good idea it’ll work,” said Mark Brodl, a Trinity biology professor and grant director.

Programs will focus on taking students out of their normal school environment and bringing them onto a college campus where they can get the feel of a college atmosphere. Most of the students come from families who are not college-educated.

“They don’t understand what college is about and they don’t understand how science gets done,” Brodl said.

Teachers involved in the outreach program will have to commit to having a ripple effect, he said, which means they promise to take back what they learned to their colleagues.

“We want them to work with their teacher colleagues to help spread what they’ve learned,” Brodl said.

With the grant, Trinity will create a new science educator position, who will work with future science teachers, and current SAISD teachers.

Teachers will be given a one-week mini sabbatical in which they can learn more about planning.

Additionally, SAISD students will be able to visit the university’s campus four times a year to gain a deeper understanding of the sciences.

“Seeing Trinity faculty and science majors could give them a glimpse of what it’s like going to college,” Brodl said.