



CI Faculty Member Awarded Nearly \$1 Million NSF Grant

Camarillo, Calif. Sept. 8 - California State University Channel Islands announced that the National Science Foundation (NSF) recently honored Dr. Blake Gillespie, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, with the prestigious NSF Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award.

The award, a five-year, \$920,552 grant in recognition of Gillespie's teaching and research in protein-ligand interactions and biomolecular dynamics, is supported by funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Gillespie's project, 'Binding and Biomolecular Dynamics in Undergraduate Teaching and Research,' examines how proteins are affected by other molecules they encounter in the cell. Gillespie explained that he was focused on the forces that make biological molecules function or malfunction, that make proteins fold and unfold. "Diseases like Alzheimer's and Mad Cow are examples of proteins not folding properly. An understanding of this process will allow us to re-engineer biological molecules to do a better or different job," maintains Gillespie.

Gillespie's lab deals with the fundamentals of molecular biophysics. Many of his experiments and research will be woven directly into the curriculum of several CI science courses. Dr. Gillespie's award will provide the University's students in regular classes with experiential learning opportunities and with actual research laboratory experiences that support the work of faculty researchers. The grant also provides summer research internships for designated groups of high school students and their science teachers.

"Support for stellar scientists like Dr. Gillespie is a wise investment at a time when funding to higher education is in jeopardy. I know that there will be substantial returns in terms of strengthening the educational pipeline for careers in the sciences and the potential to improve understanding and treatment of diseases," stated President Richard R. Rush.

Dr. Gillespie stated, "This grant provides for students at so many levels: my own research assistants, every CI chemistry major, many biology majors, and high school students in our community. In the end, the project is really dedicated to providing opportunities for all of them."

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CSU Channel Islands is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

CSUCI Mission Statement

Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.