

**HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGE GRANTS
PROGRAM SUMMARY -- FY 2006**

**Higher Education Programs
Science and Education Resources Development
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Launched in 1990, the Higher Education Challenge Grants program is administered by the USDA Office of Higher Education Programs under the authority contained in section 1417(b)(1) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3152(b)(1)). This program is designed to stimulate and enable colleges and universities to provide the quality of education necessary to produce baccalaureate or higher degree level graduates capable of strengthening the Nation's food and agricultural scientific and professional workforce.

The purpose of The Higher Education Challenge (HEC) Grants Program is to strengthen institutional capacities to improve teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences or in rural economic, community and business development, including curriculum, faculty, scientific instrumentation, instructional delivery systems, and student recruitment and retention, to respond to identified State, regional, national or international educational needs.

Projects supported by the Higher Education Challenge Grants Program should: (1) address a State, regional, national, or international educational need; (2) involve a creative or nontraditional approach toward addressing that need that can serve as a model to others; (3) encourage and facilitate better working relationships in the university science and education community, as well as between universities and the private sector, to enhance program quality and supplement available resources; and (4) result in benefits that will likely transcend the project duration and USDA support.

Funded projects should address one or more of the following targeted areas: (a) curricula design and materials development; (b) faculty preparation and enhancement for teaching; (c) instructional delivery systems, (d) student experiential learning, or (e) student recruitment or retention. Also in 2006, all projects had to address one of three Priority Areas (reference Table # 2, below, for complete description).

Applications may be submitted by (a) U.S. public or private nonprofit colleges and universities offering a baccalaureate or first professional degree in at least one discipline or area of the food and agricultural sciences; (b) land-grant colleges and universities (including land grant institutions in the Insular Areas); (c) colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences; and (d) other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences.

For the FY 2006 award cycle, \$5,093,732 was available for project grant awards after subtracting administrative costs.

A total of 55 different institutions from 39 states submitted 110 proposals requesting \$25,579,543. In April 2006, a 32-member peer review panel evaluated these proposals. The peer panel included faculty and administrators from land grant and non-land grant colleges and universities and practitioners from the food and agricultural sciences community.

Funds were available to support a total of 18 awards from 13 institutions in 13 states. Eight projects were formal Joint Project Proposals requiring partnerships between two or more institutions.

The following tables summarize this year's Higher Education Challenge Grants program competition:

Table 1. FUNDS REQUESTED/AWARDED BY EMPHASIS AREAS FY 2006 Higher Education Challenge Grants				
TARGET ACADEMIC EMPHASIS AREAS	NUMBER OF PROPOSALS		AMOUNT OF FUNDS	
	Requested	Awarded	Requested	Awarded*
Animal Sciences (A)	13	3	\$3,162,087	\$1,126,838
Conservation (Including Nat. Res. & Forestry) (C)	13	1	\$2,428,352	\$ 133,445
Family/Consumer Sciences (H)	14	2	\$3,559,472	\$ 564,754
Food Sciences (F) & Nutrition (N)	14	2	\$2,886,790	\$ 941,569
Agricultural Social Sciences (S) & General (G)	15	3	\$4,090,053	\$ 783,476
Interntional (I) & General (G)	13	2	\$3,328,812	\$ 551,654
Plant Sciences (P)	13	2	\$2,666,325	\$ 292,594
Veterinary Medicine (V)	15	3	\$3,457,652	\$ 699,402
TOTALS	110	18	\$25,579,543	\$5,093,732

* Not all projects request the maximum funds allowed per institution under this grant (\$150,000 - Regular Proposals, or \$500,000 - Joint Project Proposals. These amounts represent the total Federal dollars awarded to each lead institution, including the funds that will be subcontracted to collaborating institutions for joint projects. With fund transfer restrictions taken into account, no single institution will receive more than \$150,000 (Regular proposals) or \$250,000 (Joint proposals). All funded projects in this grants program require 1:1 non-Federal matching funds. Matching funds are not reflected in these Federal award amounts.

**Table 2. FUNDS AWARDED BY PRIORITY AREAS
FY 2006 Higher Education Challenge Grants**

<p align="center">PRIORITY AREAS Referenced in FY 2006 Request For Application Document</p>	<p align="center">NUMBER OF PROPOSALS*</p>	<p align="center">AMOUNT OF FUNDS*</p>
<p><u>Priority Area #1:</u> Proposals that form partnerships among several colleges and/or universities (e.g., ‘centers of excellence’) to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction, in disciplines related to the USDA Mission, that reduce instructional duplication and costs. Projects must include regional or interstate curriculum development, faculty sharing, cross enrollments, joint degrees (e.g., DVM/MPH), or similar, closely-related academic activities culminating in inter-institutional, academic program delivery. Projects should document positive impact on large numbers of students.</p>	<p align="center">6</p>	<p align="center">\$ 2,775,020</p>
<p><u>Priority Area #2:</u> Proposals that support identified critical and emerging national issues in disciplines related to the USDA Mission. Projects must address at least one of the selected USDA Strategic Goals (see Part VIII, E., Definitions), AND ALSO deliver for-credit, academic coursework that prepares graduates to specifically address one of the following critical, national issues: (1) animal or plant biosecurity; (2) new, bio-based products and technologies; (3) healthy food choices and lifestyles, and obesity; (4) human sciences that address rural youth, family and community well-being; (5) forest and rangeland health and protection including improved soil, air, and water quality; or (6) global agricultural and natural resources markets, trade, and economic development. Projects should document (e.g., benchmarking curricula to employer needs) better-qualified graduates to address a targeted issue identified above.</p>	<p align="center">9</p>	<p align="center">\$ 1,554,372</p>
<p><u>Priority Area #3:</u> Proposals that initiate new recruitment and retention strategies in disciplines related to the USDA Mission. Projects must address at least one of the following student service activities: (a) increasing enrollment of qualified students in disciplines with documented, critical workforce shortages; (b) recruiting non-traditional students and students from groups that are underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences workforce; or (c) initiating student retention programs focusing on the academic, social, or cultural needs of freshmen, transfer, or other at-risk students. Projects should document increased graduation rates of students from underrepresented populations, or increased graduation rates of students to fill critical workforce shortages in an area identified in Priority Area #2, above (or other areas of shortage that can be documented by national data).</p>	<p align="center">3</p>	<p align="center">\$ 764,340</p>
<p>*TOTALS (Projects may actually address multiple priority areas; these numbers reflect the dominant classification.)</p>	<p align="center">18</p>	<p align="center">\$ 5,093,732</p>

**Table 3. FUNDED PROJECT INFORMATION and DESCRIPTIONS
FY 2006 Higher Education Challenge Grants**

Access the following link: [FY 2006 HEC Projects](#) * to display project information. Data is from the CSREES Current Research Information System (CRIS) database.

* CRIS URL is = http://cris.csrees.usda.gov/cgi-bin/starfinder/0?path=fastlink1.txt&id=anon&pass=&search=CG=*38411*%20and%20gy=2006%20NOT%20PS=term*&format=WEBTITLESG