Scientists in the Classroom

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University of Dayton, Ohio

(For bios on the 11 fellows in the University of Dayton’s 2012 cohort, visit the related article)

Eleven professionals and recent graduates with backgrounds in science, math and engineering will soon be teaching math and science in high-need local schools as part of an innovative new program at the University of Dayton.

Ohio Chancellor Jim Petro announced the 2012 Woodrow Wilson Ohio Teaching Fellows today at the Statehouse. These fellows – from cities around Ohio – have been accepted into the program at seven Ohio colleges. The University of Dayton's cohort includes a manufacturing engineer, a research chemist, a patent-holder and a naturalist, among others.

Partnerships have redesigned teacher preparation programs to prepare the fellows in local classrooms, providing an in-depth clinical experience with mentoring and support from the university and teachers in the district. The hands-on training is similar to how physicians learn in hospitals and attorneys learn in law offices. Programs also emphasize specific teaching approaches for STEMM fields. After a year of classroom-based preparation, fellows commit to teach for at least three years in a high-need Ohio school.

Each of the 92 fellows in the 2012 class will receive a $30,000 stipend to complete a special intensive master's program at one of the participating institutions. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation of Princeton, N.J., administers the program.

The new fellows, whose masters work begins this month, will be ready to teach students in fall 2013.

One of those new fellows is Brandon Towns. Raised in the inner city of Columbus, he has a passion for urban students and plans to make a career in Dayton.

He will participate in the program at the University of Dayton where he earned an undergraduate degree in biology in 2011. Like many students nearing graduation, he weighed several options for what to do with his life.

"I started thinking about what teachers do, the impact they make," Towns said. "They are a bridge to the future who shape the minds of tomorrow. It's exciting to me to be a combination of teacher, mentor, scientist, motivational speaker and social worker. I've always considered myself a jack-of-all-trades, and teaching seems like what I was meant to do."

Ohio launched its Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship in March 2010 at John Carroll University, The Ohio State University, the University of Akron and the University of Cincinnati. Last year, the University of Dayton, Ohio University and the University of Toledo joined the program.

"Education is key to improving the economy in Ohio," Petro said. "We have jobs available in Ohio, many of them in the STEMM fields. We need students trained to fill those jobs. The universities participating in this program realize that invigorating our teacher education programs will help invigorate the way we educate our children in STEMM subject areas."

Ohio joins Indiana and Michigan as host states for the program. In each state, a blend of private and public support has been key to the creation of the program, as have gubernatorial leadership and statewide coalition-building.
The program is made possible with federal Race to the Top funds as well as commitments from six Ohio funders, including The Cleveland Foundation, George Gund Foundation, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, GAR Foundation, Battelle Memorial Institute and The Battelle Fund at the Columbus Foundation, plus matching funds provided by the campuses. Additional support for the program came from the state’s Choose Ohio First program.

For more information on the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship in Ohio, visit the related link.

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