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## Science foundation grants UT \$2 million

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**The National Science Foundation has awarded the University a \$2 million grant to improve science education in Texas middle schools. The grant, to be paid over a five-year period, will support the Texas Regional Collaboratives for Excellence in Science program— which is headquartered in the Science Education Department of the UT. College of Education.** The college administers more than \$1.2 million each year to provide professional development for science teachers in public schools across the state. "The success and growth of partnerships within Texas-education is evidence of the synergy that results when we join forces to pursue excellence and high standards for all students," Manuel Justiz, dean of the College of Education, said in a prepared statement. The grant, "Empowering Science Teachers of Texas," is aimed at improving science instruction in Texas public schools, with an emphasis on grades six through eight. "We are turning into a society that is more and more task-oriented," said Joe Stewart, the grant's project manager at the National Science Foundation, "and students will need to know more science to understand what is going on: around them." The National Science Foundation is an independent U.S. government agency that promotes science and engineering through programs that invest more than \$3.3 billion per year in 20,000 research and education projects.

Brian Giza, Research Assistant with the collaboratives, said the purpose of the grant is to improve students' performance in science courses. "It does that by concentrating on improving teaching skills in the middle schools' science areas, particularly in the physical sciences," Giza said. "The objective is to bring instructional teams here to train in the best quality physical sciences, and in turn, bring the training back to their districts." The program collaborates with existing educational institutions— including colleges, universities, K12 classes, region service centers and private—and public institutions such as museums. This will allow the collaborative "to get everyone together to reform science as is done in the classrooms," Giza said. "Basically we are focused on improving content science skills for the middle school, but also very much focused on getting broader integrations—as well as integrating science, math and reading in the curriculum. "The University and the classroom teachers can be equally beneficial to each other in this program, Giza said, adding that evolved networking is the key to empowering the teacher. . "The content knowledge that academia provides will allow them to act as a resource for the teacher as well as giving the University people a feel for what is going on in the classroom so that they can also contribute to the education of these young people," Giza said. "It is that kind of network that allows this kind of reform to be more powerful and build this collaboration we are about."

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