

School of Education Receives \$735,000 Grant

Posted: Friday, August 21, 2020

The School of Education at the University of Evansville (UE) recently received a grant totaling \$735,247 from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, which was created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). GEER Funds were created to provide support to local educational agencies and higher education institutions to develop and improve distance learning techniques and technologies throughout the state of Indiana.

With the grant funds, the UE School of Education will focus on implementing two main initiatives: 1) a free community tutoring program for students, and 2) professional development for teachers and UE students to improve student outcomes. While working toward these goals, UE will be partnering with seven school corporations throughout Southern Indiana, including the Diocese of Evansville, Warrick County Schools, Loogootee Community Schools, North Lawrence Community Schools, Orleans Community Schools, Shoals Community Schools, and Tell City Schools. While first preference will be given to partner schools, the grant activities will also be open to in-service teachers and students in K-12 corporations throughout Southern Indiana.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruption to schools across the nation, and education systems are working diligently and creatively to meet the needs of students and families during unprecedented times. Many educators fear that the extended delay in classroom instruction could impact learning outcomes and student achievement. Using the grant, the UE School of Education will offer a free tutoring program geared toward community K-12 students. UE students and current educators will be connected with students in partner schools and other K-12 school corporations, and they will provide targeted interventions to assist in closing learning gaps. Tutoring sessions will take place via Zoom or in-person using social distancing guidelines.

Monies from the grant will also be utilized to boost in-service and UE pre-service teachers' capacity to efficiently and effectively provide remote and virtual instruction. The UE School of Education will utilize Zoom sessions to introduce participants to the G Suite for Education, which is a suite of tools designed by Google to empower educators and students and promote innovative learning. Training sessions will focus on teaching in a Google-infused classroom, as well as instructional best practices for online and hybrid learning. After completion, participants will receive Google for Education Fundamentals Training certification.

"We are so honored to provide this support to our students and teachers, which is heavily needed after the last several months," said Lisa Hale, assistant professor of education at UE. "The training this grant provides will not only enhance the technology-based remote learning, but also improve in-person methodology once schools return to full-time classroom instruction."

Hale commented that the grant will enhance the learning experience for students in the School of Education. Additionally, the Google for Education certification will further prepare students for the classroom and provide a competitive edge when entering the workforce.

The grant-writing team was composed of several staff and faculty at the University of Evansville, including Sylvia DeVault, Sharon Gieselmann, Lisa Hale, Alison Jones, Mary Kessler, Shari Millikan, and Leanne Nayden. UE also worked with alumni Rick Roll and Joe Lannon for a united team effort.

Across the state, over \$61 million in GEER funding was distributed to educational agencies and institutions. The needs-based, competitive grant program was a collaborative effort among the Indiana Department of Education, the Commission for Higher Education, the Indiana State Board of Education, and the Governor's office. Through their efforts, the grant was created to support the unique challenges associated with distance and remote learning, including device access, internet connectivity, and educator training/development.