

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **\$649,000 grant from National Science Foundation to support UWF STEM students**

**Pensacola, Fla. – June 1, 2016** – The University of West Florida Department of Chemistry has received a grant totaling more than **\$649,000** from the National Science Foundation that will provide scholarships, research opportunities and professional development for academically talented, financially disadvantaged students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The grant will be used to establish a NSF Scholarships in STEM program, as well as create a STEM for Life Seminar Series within the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering.

“Our goal is to provide a holistic education to our students by integrating social, academic, mentoring and research components into a single program,” said Dr. Karen Molek, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. “Literature and UWF data suggest that synergizing resources into a single program will increase retention, graduation rates and success beyond UWF and ultimately bridge the college attainment gap experienced by students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Molek said research also shows that students who are economically disadvantaged are less likely to pursue a career in STEM. She said the goal of the four-year seminar series is to help students recognize their potential while learning what resources are available to assist them with hard and soft skills necessary for career success.

In addition to student support, the program will include a research component. The research will attempt to determine the impact of the various activities and STEM for Life Seminar events on student retention and graduation, as well as employment and graduate school acceptance.

“The knowledge and best practices gained from the program and research study will empower UWF and national institutions to sustain and expand this model,” Molek added.

For more information on the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering, visit [uwf.edu/cse](http://uwf.edu/cse).

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*Dr. Karen Molek, assistant professor in the UWF Department of Chemistry*