U.S. National Science Foundation EPIIC: Developing Emerging Technology Ecosystem Partnerships For Primarily Undergraduate Institutions

COHORT CONTACT INFORMATION

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COHORT ACTIVITIES

NSF EPIIC is a catalyst to improve how Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) engage with their communities through applied research projects in the following ways:

Awareness: By participating in NSF EPIIC, PUIs demonstrate their commitment to applied research and community engagement, increasing visibility and fostering understanding among internal and external stakeholders.

Recognition: The NSF EPIIC endorsement enhances the credibility of PUIs, elevates their profile, and creates new opportunities for collaboration and growth with community partners.

Empowerment: NSF EPIIC funding enables PUIs to build capacity by refining administrative processes and launching pilot projects that serve as test cases to improve partnerships.

Self-Sufficiency: Developing sustainable processes allows PUIs to manage research projects independently, secure external funding, and maintain ongoing community engagement and research excellence.

Peer Support: Fostered by NSF EPIIC, PUIs find collaboration and peer support through cohort meetings to share advances and discoveries, exchange ideas and tips on institutional and grant-related activities, and encourage each other in our individual challenges. Our particular cohort interaction led us to become the subject of a Chronicle of Higher Education article (T. Swaak, “Spotlight: From Strangers to Partners.” In “Adapting to AI”, June 2024, pp. 37- 38).

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

- Our NSF funding and capacity building activities are leading to more opportunities such as forthcoming college-funded AI Education Fellowships that advance institutional goals.
- Working with faculty and staff to identify partner organizations, projects, and themes for future workforce development.
- Coordinating networking events and selecting partners for pilot projects that engage faculty and students in industry work within the Vermont ecosystem.
- Participated in activities such as the NSF GRANTED RAISE-VT Capstone Workshop and the NSF Exploring EPSCoR Ecosystem Workshops.
- NSF EPIIC findings will inform other hopeful NSF projects, for example coordinating partner relationships under the NSF ExLENT program.

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

- Created an Innovation Hub at CNU: www.cnu.edu/ihub
- Formed an advisory board composed of administrative and academic University leaders and leaders in the community, regional industry, research institutions and local government.
- Piloted and provided incentives for two research projects with external partners (Width.ai and Virginia Institute of Marine Science).
- Participated in a NSF Engines preliminary proposal (Virginia Advanced Air Mobility Alliance).
- Organized an Applied AI Interest Group with CNU faculty and administrators.
- Motivated CNU to provide release-time to a qualified faculty member to coach others applying for external funding to navigate the intricacies of the application process.

Western Oregon UNIVERSITY

- Hosted an AI workshop where we explored AI’s capabilities, limitations, and ethical concerns, generating enthusiasm but highlighting the need for further investigation into academic integrity implications.
- Held the inaugural industry advisory board, connecting computing industry professionals with WOU administrators and staff to discuss AI’s applications across industries.
- Collaborated with faculty and staff to identify future workforce development needs and possible barriers to working with external partners.
- Funding a faculty fellow in the coming academic year to explore AI’s workforce applications and integrate them into our curriculum.
- Working with the National Council of Research Administrators to evaluate our policies and practices to ensure we are set up to effectively work with external partners.

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