

Aiming to multiply math, science teachers

UTD founds training program with funds from Dallas nonprofit

By **HOLLY K. HACKER**
Staff Writer
hhacker@dallasnews.com

Math and science whizzes aren't necessarily good at teaching. And teachers don't always know their calculus or chemistry.

The University of Texas at Dallas aims to marry those skills with a new teacher training program that campus officials will announce today. The program, modeled after one at UT-Austin, is designed to address a shortage of math and science teachers, and ultimately turn more young people on to careers in those fields.

The program, called UTeach Dallas, will get off the ground with up to \$2.4 million over five years from the National Math and Science Initiative, a Dallas-based nonprofit group. Eleven other universities across the U.S. will receive similar grants.

"If you train a teacher, they reach hundreds and hundreds of students, and that spreads the quality of math and science education very broadly," said Myron Sallamon, dean of UTD's School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

UTD now produces about 10 math and science teachers a year. With the grant, the goal is to increase that number to 30 graduates a year. There's a big need in Texas, especially with new requirements that high school students take four years each of math and science.

The UTeach program at UT-Austin started in 1997. It has produced more than 400 graduates certified to teach math or science in middle and high schools. Almost all of them go into teaching — and stick with it. Seventy percent of UTeach graduates are still teaching after five years, compared with 50 percent of teachers nation-

WHAT THE GRANT WILL FUND

The University of Texas at Dallas expects to announce a math and science education grant today. The grant is for up to \$2.4 million over five years. The money will go to several areas:

- Hiring expert teachers to act as liaisons between UTD and local schools
- Paying teachers who work with UTD education students placed in their schools
- Scholarships, internships and other financial aid for UTD students majoring in math or science education
- Instructional materials and lab supplies

UTD is expected to make the program fully self-supporting after the grant runs out. Already, the university has received \$200,000 in private donations.

ally.

The program is unusual in several respects, said Michael Marder, co-director of the UTeach program in Austin. For starters, it gets future teachers inside schools from their first semester on. The idea is to expose them early to the challenges teachers face so they can decide whether they really want a career in the classroom.

The program also brings together faculty from the education, math and science departments, so they make sure their classes and goals blend well. And students learn how to teach concepts specific to math and science, be it the circumference of a circle or ways to gather scientific data.

Students also get financial help

in the form of internships, scholarships and loans. For instance, some students qualify for loans of up to \$10,000 — which can be forgiven if they teach for a certain period of time.

Most of the money comes from Exxon Mobil. The Irving-based company, which employs 14,000 engineers and scientists, is giving \$125 million to the National Math and Science Initiative for UTeach and other programs.

Exxon Mobil made \$39.5 billion last year — the largest reported profit for any U.S. corporation. The company gives about \$200 million a year for charitable causes.

Foundations run by Bill and Melinda Gates and Michael and Susan Dell also are putting money into the fund.

Some of the other 11 schools getting grants from the National Math and Science Initiative this year are Florida State University, the University of Florida, the University of Colorado, the University of Kansas, Western Kentucky University and the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Irvine.

The University of Houston also is expected to receive a grant later this week.

According to an international survey released Tuesday, U.S. 15-year-olds ranked below average in 2006-07 math and science tests. In the Program for International Student Assessment survey, U.S. students did worse than most of their counterparts in industrialized countries, including Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and the United Kingdom. The U.S. did better than only a handful of countries, including Turkey and Mexico.