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Saint Michael's College receives \$766,000 NSF grant as part of a 5-year \$6.6 million Plant Genome Grant allocated to 4 universities and Saint Michael's

National Science Foundation grant could lead to better corn plants

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Saint Michael's College biologist Dr. Mark Lubkowitz and his students join a team of researchers from the University of Missouri, University of Florida, Purdue University and the University Nebraska-Lincoln, on a five-year project to study the genes that control the movement of carbohydrates in corn.



Saint Michael's and the other four institutions, major research universities, have been awarded a \$6.6 million grant from the Plant Genome Research Program at the National Science Foundation for a joint five-year research project that will involve undergraduates at each institution.

Working with 45 Saint Michael's students over the next five years, Dr. Lubkowitz and his co-investigators across the country will do research that could lead to increased corn yield, more drought resistant plants, larger plants and easier production of biofuels.

"To be part of a Plant Genome Grant-the first ever awarded in the state of Vermont-is an incredible opportunity for our students," Dr. Lubkowitz said.

"As for the actual research," he said, "people often ask me what Carbohydrate Partitioning (CP) is, and I tell them, think biofuels, crop yields, and the mitigating of global climate change."

The researchers indicate that carbohydrate transport is little understood, but is "one of the most important factors in plant development." Thus, understanding it better has great potential to improve corn yield and quality.

"Our research," Lubkowitz said, "may give insights into how we can increase the movement of carbohydrates and could thus affect biofuel production and the rate at which we can pull CO2 out of the atmosphere."

Additional benefits of the grant

1. The research has the potential to advance society's understanding of drought stress, biofuel production, food production and carbon sequestration (binding).
2. The work integrates undergraduates at major research universities and at a liberal arts college into all areas of the research.
3. And the project, in collaboration with Vermont EPSCoR, will run a workshop for high school teachers and students on the vital significance of plant genomics and Carbohydrate Partitioning (CP) in plants.

Learn what matters at Saint Michael's College, a selective, challenging liberal arts college located just minutes from Burlington, Vermont, one of the best college towns in the country. Education, peace and justice, service and community are at the heart of St. Mike's, one of only 4 Phi Beta Kappa Catholic colleges in New England. We are identified by the Princeton Review as one of the Best 371 Colleges in the country, and as a top national liberal arts college by U. S. News & World Report.

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