



News Release

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Four Public University Researchers Receive Early-Career Awards

PIERRE, S.D. – Four young researchers from South Dakota public universities have received highly competitive awards to advance their careers in science and engineering. Three of the awards come from the National Science Foundation; the fourth was granted by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).

“These are coveted and highly competitive awards in higher education. For a public university system to receive four of these grants in one year is a major coup,” said Paul Turman, system vice president of academic affairs for the South Dakota Board of Regents. “It certainly confirms the outstanding work being undertaken by our faculty across South Dakota,” Turman said.

One of the grants is a DTRA Young Investigator Award given to Lori Groven of South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. Dr. Groven’s research in the SDSM&T Chemical and Biological Engineering Department is focused on the design of polymer-bound reactive materials. The award is for \$300,000 over three years, with the option of two additional years of her research supported at \$100,000 per year.

The Board of Regents and South Dakota’s Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) jointly co-sponsored a six-month-long faculty development opportunity that assists new faculty in preparing a National Science Foundation CAREER proposal. This year, three faculty members who participated in this proposal development program were funded. The three NSF-CAREER Awards went to Senthil (Sen) Subramanian at South Dakota State University and to Haoran Sun and Zhenqiang (Rick) Wang, both at the University of South Dakota.

Dr. Subramanian’s NSF award, worth \$660,000 over five years, goes to support discovery of molecular signaling mechanisms that regulate legume nodule development. Applications from his research project will improve crop production, particularly soybean yields.

An award of \$600,000 over five years to Dr. Sun will support development of next-generation, high-performance organic semiconductor materials and assist in new drug designs. Dr. Sun’s research projects also impact the teaching of undergraduate advanced chemistry courses and

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development of science education and outreach activities for K-12 students and the general public.

Dr. Wang's work at USD is focused on developing effective approaches to create complex functional materials from small molecular building blocks. His work has applications for many fields, such as gas separation and water remediation. The NSF grant he received is \$650,000 over five years.

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BROADCASTERS' ADVISORY:

Senthil (Sen) Subramanian is pronounced (sen-TELL' soo-brah-MAN'-ee-an).

Haoran Sun is pronounced (HOW'-ran Suhn).

Zhenquiang Wang is pronounced (SHENG'-qwang Wang); he prefers to be called Rick Wang.