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Xavier University of Louisiana Part of Team that Won Largest Grant Ever Awarded by U.S. National Science Foundation

New Orleans – Xavier University of Louisiana, on the cusp of celebrating its first 100 years of service, is proud to be one of more than 50 public and private partners in a statewide effort that has won the largest and most competitive grant ever awarded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) up to \$160 million over the next 10 years. The NSF Louisiana Transition Engine (NSF Engines) grant is focused on energy transition and decarbonization of Louisiana’s industrial corridor and will support Future Use of Energy in Louisiana, or FUEL. [The NSF announced the award earlier today.](#)

Led by Louisiana State University (LSU), the FUEL initiative includes private energy companies, universities, community and technical colleges, and state agencies that will work together to drive technology and workforce development supporting Louisiana’s energy industry. FUEL seeks to resolve emerging challenges in areas like carbon capture, transport and storage; hydrogen; use of carbon dioxide to produce low-carbon fuels and essential carbon-based products; water use and management; sustainable manufacturing; and policy development.

“As a core partner of the FUEL engine, Xavier will be instrumental in the development of equitable solutions for the Gulf Coast region as it builds an innovative ecosystem for energy transition and creates a more sustainable future while addressing economic, health, and racial disparities that have negatively affected our state,” said **Reynold Verret, Xavier University of Louisiana**. “Together with our esteemed partners, we are poised to chart new frontiers, address the pressing challenges of decarbonization, create new paths for a sustainable energy economy, and foster a brighter future for our community and beyond, in accord with the mission to promote a more just and humane society passed to us by Xavier’s foundress Saint Katharine Drexel nearly a century ago.”

FUEL is driven to focus on influencing three core functions: Use-Inspired Research and Development, Workforce Development, and Translation of Innovation to Practice/Technology Commercialization. As a core partner in FUEL, Xavier is strongly represented in the partnership and played a crucial role in developing the core functional areas. Kaneisha Bailey Akinpelumi, associate vice president of Xavier’s Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (ORSP), serves on the initiative’s seven-member leadership team. Additionally, she represents Xavier on the governance board. Dr. Ashwith Chilvery, assistant vice president in the ORSP and associate professor of physics, played a critical role in the development of the Use-Inspired Research and Development and Translation of Innovation to Practice/Technology Commercialization core functional areas and will continue to represent Xavier on those subcommittees.

“This transformative investment of NSF fuels Xavier’s commitment to training and preparing a diverse workforce, advancing knowledge in energy transition research and development, fostering new collaborations, and driving equitable economic prosperity in our region,” explained Akinpelumi.

Chilvery added, “This exciting project will increase the use-inspired research on the campus and will further boost our energy and sustainability initiatives on campus.”

Louisiana is one of the world's leading producers of energy, chemicals and petrochemicals and is a world leader in energy expertise and solutions. As the state's manufacturing plants and refineries adapt to growing global market demand for lower-carbon solutions and reduced reliance on carbon-intensive fuels, FUEL will help the energy industry identify, research and develop new technologies to ensure the economic benefits, jobs and investments created by these innovations stay in Louisiana. The state's geographic location and existing infrastructure of plants, refineries and 50,000 miles of pipelines place Louisiana at the epicenter of energy transition.

This grant will position Louisiana as the global research and development leader for the expanding energy industry. Through Louisiana Economic Development (LED), the state will also contribute to the project and its projected broad economic impacts with an additional \$67.5 million over the next decade. This will include funds to help the higher education partners build a world-class team to convert research into practical and useful solutions.

The NSF considered more than 700 concepts before allowing 188 teams to submit grant proposals last January. In early June, the NSF did a virtual site visit that helped narrow the field to 16 finalists, including the FUEL team (referred to as ELITE in the earlier articles). In late August, a group of reviewers from the NSF conducted a multi-day site visit to the LSU flagship campus in Baton Rouge before making the final selection and award. At the August site visit, NSF met with more than 125 individuals involved in the project, including five Louisiana university presidents.

"The inaugural NSF Engines awards demonstrate our enduring commitment to create opportunity everywhere and enable innovation anywhere," said **NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan**. "Through these NSF Engines, NSF aims to expand the frontiers of technology and innovation and spur economic growth across the nation through unprecedented investments in people and partnerships. NSF Engines hold significant promise to elevate and transform entire geographic regions into world-leading hubs of innovation."

To learn more and see the complete list of partners, visit the [website](#).



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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925 by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African Americans and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics,

engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (3,419 students) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula provides students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.XULA.edu or contact Melissa Newell at (504) 520-5240 or XULANews@XULA.edu.