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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UNM-LA receives NSF grant for Applied Technologies program**

UNM-Los Alamos recently received an \$874,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to improve and market the UNM-LA Applied Technologies program. This associate degree in Applied Science is designed to train students for future careers as technicians in the areas of solar, electro-mechanical and nano technology. "There is a growing need on the part of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and other high tech businesses and agencies for technicians with skills in these areas," said Applied Technologies Program Coordinator, Dr. Irina Alvestad.

This is the first National Science Foundation grant and the largest grant ever received by UNM-LA. Alvestad will oversee all activities related to the administration of the grant. Grant funds will be distributed over a three-year period. Alvestad plans to use the funds in a number of ways: implement hands on and project-based learning across the curriculum, acquire state-of-the art instrumentation, pilot an innovative faculty sharing program with Santa Fe Community College, and introduce high school teachers and students to STEM (science, math, engineering and technology) curriculum.

The UNM-LA Tutor Center will also benefit from the funds through the hiring of new tutors in STEM areas. "We plan to offer workshops as well as individual tutoring in STEM subjects," said Alvestad.

The promotion of project-based learning across the curriculum will be a major goal to increase students' motivation and learning. "Students will focus on the engineering design process," said Alvestad. "Hands-on learning gives students a purpose for learning the skills and has been shown to improve retention of the material."

The program will also develop partnerships with local employers to offer service-based and paid internships as a means of improving student performance and retention.

Outreach is an integral part of Alvestad's plan. "Expanding the participation of minorities and underrepresented groups is one of our objectives," she said.

The program will reach out to high school teachers through professional development workshops. High school students will be able to begin taking courses that will lead them into technical fields while they are in high school through the dual credit program which gives students both high school and college credit for the same classes.

The program will collaborate with two other NSF-funded projects, SCME (Southwest Center for Microsystems Education) and MatEd (National Resource Center for Materials Technology Education) through curriculum sharing.

The UNM-LA Applied Technologies Program accepts applications every semester. The Fall Semester begins August 22. Visit [www.la.unm.edu](http://www.la.unm.edu) or call Alvestad at 661-4696 to learn more about the program.