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Contact: Lisa A. Fellers  
Director of Communications  
Office: (817) 531-4498  
Cell: (817) 874-8683  
lfellers@txwes.edu

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wesleyan offers credit as bonus to teachers through new grant-funded  
biology program  
*Program unique to Fort Worth***

FORT WORTH, Oct. 14 – Texas Wesleyan University has been a recipient of federal Teacher Quality Professional Development Grants since 1990, providing training for Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade schoolteachers to increase student success in algebra and physical science. Teachers who complete the program earn 150 hours of continuing professional education credit and six hours of graduate credit. The university is expanding its program through the installation of a third course: biology, directed by Dr. Bruce Benz, professor of biology at Wesleyan.

“It’s a really great opportunity for the teachers,” says Deborah Roark, Wesleyan’s director of grants and research. She adds that because Wesleyan participants receive six hours of graduate credit toward a master’s degree in education, Wesleyan’s program is unique within Fort Worth.

The biology grant is based on the existing teacher quality grant proposals written by Dr.

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Ricardo Rodriguez, professor of chemistry and the McCann endowment professor at Texas Wesleyan. The grant follows the biology module created by Texas Christian University faculty Dr. Molly Weinburgh and Dr. Ray Drenner.

Originally known as Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development State Grants under Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, teacher quality grants in Texas are funded by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The program offers professional development opportunities for teachers. At Wesleyan, it is designed to train elementary and secondary school teachers who are certified to teach but are currently teaching outside of their discipline, which is approximately 10 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers in the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD). The goal is to improve teacher quality and better prepare teachers to help students achieve academic success through modern teaching modules and technology, such as DNA sequencers.

“We’re training teachers to use the most innovative and up-to-date tools to make students more successful,” says Benz.

Currently funded through President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind initiative, the teacher quality grants program endeavors to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom through educational resources, meeting the criteria Bush established during his national radio address in August 2004: to challenge the “soft bigotry of low expectations in public education.” Wesleyan’s program provides teachers with money for tuition, books, fees, materials and supplies for their students, a \$900 stipend, transportation reimbursement, and in certain cases, money toward childcare. The cost of the program is provided by the teacher quality grants, the university, and in the case of FWISD, the district the teacher serves.

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FWISD participants praise the program, telling university officials that students' test scores have risen considerably since the teachers began attending workshops at Wesleyan.

“This is part of our existence,” says Benz. “We are known as the educators ... programs like these make Wesleyan reputable. We have a following among the teachers that have been around a while. They are enthusiastic about Texas Wesleyan.”

Rodriguez, who teaches the physical science workshops in the teacher quality grant program, agrees with Benz saying, “The teachers who have been in our program take the activities we generate back to the classroom ... when the teachers bring these activities back they find the students are really interested in [learning], which is really what the intent is. It teaches [the teachers] in greater depth, and at the same time motivates the students to continue learning ... which in turn, motivates the teachers.”

Each professional development course will accommodate 30 teachers and require a commitment of approximately 80 cumulative hours for the calendar year. They are free and open to interested elementary or secondary school teachers in any district. The biology portion will begin in late January 2005, and spaces are still available. To apply, contact Dr. Bruce Benz at (817) 531-4895 or bbenz@txwes.edu. The algebra and physical science workshops will begin in summer 2005 and run through the spring. To apply for the algebra workshops, contact Dr. Jane Moore, professor of mathematics at Wesleyan, at (817) 531-4882 or jamoore@txwes.edu. For physical science, contact Dr. Ricardo Rodriguez at (817) 531-4864 or rrodriguez@txwes.edu. Interested individuals need only give their name, school district and contact information.

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