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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Xavier University of Louisiana Scores \$4.2M Grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) Division of Materials Research (DMR)**

**New Orleans** - Xavier University of Louisiana proudly announces it is the recipient of a transformative \$4.2 million grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) Division of Materials Research (DMR). The funding from this award, made possible through the prestigious Partnerships for Research and Education in Materials (PREM) program, will bolster Xavier's cutting-edge research and education initiatives in materials science by supporting the XULA-UChicago Partnership for Research and Education in Innovative Composite Materials Project.

"This award will greatly enhance research infrastructure here at Xavier," said **Reynold Verret, President of Xavier University of Louisiana**. "It will also provide invaluable opportunities for our students to engage in research at the cutting edge and strengthen our partnerships and collaborations with leading research institutions. We are eager to see the far-reaching benefits that will accrue to our students and their capacity to contribute to advancement in materials science."

The project continues a partnership Xavier University of Louisiana established with the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (MRSEC) at the University of Chicago (UChicago) that started back in 2021. The overall goals of the project are to provide and sustain a pathway leading Xavier students into doctorate programs in fields that are relevant to materials science and engineering and to increase the university's capacity and output in materials science and engineering research and education. Asem Abdulahad, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry, is the director and principal investigator (PI) of the project. Dr. Abdulahad says the primary goal of the project is to provide a pathway for Xavier students into PhD programs, especially programs in materials science and engineering fields.

"We want to accomplish this by engaging our students in cutting-edge materials science and engineering research that addresses ongoing clean energy and climate change challenges," said **Dr. Abdulahad**. "I believe that this NSF PREM project will benefit the university by helping to increase our overall research capacity, adding new ideas to our existing curriculum, and by continuing our strong legacy of educating future leaders."

The grant will support ongoing materials science/engineering research at XULA by continuing to engage Xavier's students in ongoing cutting-edge research projects that include developing new composite materials for clean/renewable energy applications. Additionally, Dr. Abdulahad hopes that the award will expand Xavier's current programs supporting academic enrichment for K-12 by students adding educational activities and experiments in materials science/engineering. He shared that the project will also seek to develop a new K-12 teacher training program designed to help implement materials science education into regular curriculums.

Xavier's partnership with the UChicago MRSEC allows the two universities to access the other's research equipment and instrumentation. It also secures research positions for participating Xavier students in their UChicago's Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU program). Faculty, staff and affiliates of both schools will be able to continue expanding outreach endeavors. Xavier's Dean of its College of Arts and Sciences, Anderson Sunda-Meya, Ph.D., was instrumental in the first three years of the partnership and in setting up a 4+1 XULA Advanced Scholars Master's of Engineering program at UChicago, which allows qualified and interested Xavier students to earn their master's of engineering from UChicago.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) often face tough challenges with underfunding in critical areas such as research, and this substantial investment from the NSF leaves Xavier poised to make groundbreaking advancements in materials research, foster innovation, and drive progress in scientific achievements while staying committed to the university's dedication to academic excellence.

"I am proud to celebrate the \$4.2 million in funding that Xavier University will receive from the U.S. National Science Foundation's Division of Materials Research. As the demand for research in STEM fields continues to grow, especially in addressing issues like the climate crisis, it is crucial that students from historically Black colleges and universities have equal opportunities to enter these careers," said **United States Congressman and Xavier alumnus Troy A. Carter, Sr. ('86) (LA-02)**. "For nearly a century, Xavier University has been a beacon of excellence, and this funding will further empower students and faculty to make monumental contributions to science. This is more than just a win for Xavier University and our district; it is a win for our nation as we continue to advance."

The PREM program is designed to enhance the capabilities of HBCUs in the field of materials science. Partnerships created between HBCUs and leading research universities are important because they create a vibrant ecosystem for collaborative research and education. To that end, Xavier University of Louisiana remains steadfast in its commitment to leveraging this NSF grant to advance its mission of promoting excellence in education and research, especially in underrepresented communities. Xavier recognizes that this grant is not just an investment in its future, but a resounding and powerful endorsement of the remarkable role that the brilliant minds of staff and students at HBCUs play in shaping the future of science and technology so that we can all have better tomorrows.

"This is a major investment in Xavier's mission to advance opportunities for our students, schools, and communities in Louisiana," said **United States Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.** "This announcement provides Xavier University students with the resources they need to excel in science and engineering. We are setting up Louisiana and future generations for success."



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#### **About Xavier University of Louisiana**

*On the cusp of celebrating its first 100 years of service, Xavier University of Louisiana remains America's only historically Black and Catholic University and is ranked among the top HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier has historically produced 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 among the country's top producers of African American pharmacists.*

*Established almost a century ago in 1925 by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African Americans and Native Americans to receive a quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in nearly every industry, including the arts, sciences, business, education, pharmacy, and political science. More recent additions in STEM-based master's programs and undergraduate options in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience, and genetics, have provided Xavier students (3,181students) an unbeatable experience of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty and 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, developing all who choose to learn at the institution into the next generation of leaders and agents of positive change. Blessed with a mission to promote a more just and humane society, Xavier is leading the way to a brighter future for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit [www.XULA.edu](http://www.XULA.edu) or contact the Marketing and Communications Department at (504) 520-5214 or [XULANews@XULA.edu](mailto:XULANews@XULA.edu).*