

Federal cash will upgrade labs at UW-Rock

(Published Saturday, August 2, 2003)

By Frank Schultz/Gazette Staff

Students studying chemistry and biology at UW-Rock County will see more up-to-date technology in their laboratories this fall, thanks to \$100,000 in federal funding.

The money also will increase the number of general-use computers available to students at the Janesville college.

Rep. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat who represents the 2nd Congressional District, secured the funding. UW-Rock is not in Baldwin's congressional district, but UW-Rock serves her constituents who live in the western half of Rock County, including Beloit.

UW-Rock Dean Janet Philipp said Baldwin's office called her in January, asking for a funding proposal to enhance the curriculum. Baldwin asked for a proposal of \$50,000 to \$150,000, and Philipp said she produced one for the maximum amount.

The grant was approved for \$100,000, "so we were very pleased," Philipp said.

Philipp said students have been asking for more access to general-use computers. The biology and chemistry faculty had a standing list of equipment needs that UW-Rock has not been able to fund from the approximately \$30,000 in annual state funding that is earmarked for equipment upgrades, she said.

About \$27,000 of the grant will pay for biology equipment and supplies, Philipp said, and \$16,000 will buy chemistry equipment and supplies. The rest will pay for new computers and associated expenses of setting up a computer lab. The lab will be set up in what is now a study area in the library.

The science equipment includes a digital camera for microscopes, plant growth chambers, DNA equipment, a microbiology "clean" hood for lab preparation and a computer system that uses infrared to measure pressures and temperatures.

The DNA equipment will allow faculty to teach that topic in ways that were not possible before, Philipp said.

Baldwin secured the money from discretionary funding in the 2003 federal budget, a spokesman said.

"I know that UW-Rock is a vital component of Rock County's economic development," Baldwin said. "This school's offerings for students preparing for health-related careers is important, and having new equipment will help educators do an even better job of preparing students for the job market."

Philipp said about 40 students at the freshman-sophomore college are in a pre-nursing program, and many more are looking to enter other high-need health professions.

The school now has 50 general-use computers for its 950 students. The grant will pay for about 30 more.

Philipp said she expects to receive the money from the Department of Education this month, and students should see the results by the time the semester starts Sept. 2 or at least this fall.