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Grace McClellan 2016 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program

Grace McClellan from Lebanon, Tennessee, received a three year National Science Foundation graduate research fellowship beginning this fall.

The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program chooses students to award students based on their demonstrated potential to contribute to strengthening the vitality of the U.S. science and engineering enterprise.

"We are delighted to have Grace McClellan, a student in our civil and environmental engineering program, win such a prestigious award and we're thrilled she has chosen to continue her doctorate research at Tennessee Tech," said Vahid Motevalli, associate dean for research and innovation. "Grace is the only student from Tennessee Tech to receive this award in 2016."

McClellan's proposed research, "Linking diversity of polyphosphate accumulating organisms to improve functional stability of the enhanced biological phosphorus removal process," is being supervised by Tania Datta, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering. The objective is to improve the processes that use microorganisms to remove nutrients from wastewater.

The biological nutrient removal process already implemented in many wastewater treatment facilities is not entirely reliable. The unpredicted failures of this process are mostly due to a lack of understanding the microorganisms involved.

Recipients may choose what years they wish to use the funds, sequentially or biennial, but financial support is only rewarded for three years maximum. Tennessee Tech will receive a cost of education allowance in lieu of all required tuition and fees for each of the three years she chooses to utilize the fellowship funding.

Prior to this fellowship McClellan received Tennessee Tech's Diversity Fellowship, a "Grant in Aid of Research" from Sigma Xi, and the Albert A. Cannella Engineering Memorial Scholarship.

"I have not received an award as prestigious as the NSF GRFP, but I am truly grateful for each and every award since they all have allowed for me to attend graduate school," McClellan said.

McClellan graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in 2004 with a Bachelor of Science, specifically biology, with a concentration in genetics and biotechnology. She is expected to finish her doctorate from Tennessee Tech in 2019.

Tennessee Tech College of Engineering offers ABET-accredited undergraduate programs in chemical engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering, computer engineering, mechanical engineering, and computer science. At the graduate level, the college offers both master's degrees and a doctorate in engineering. Founded in 1915, Tech offers more than 40 bachelor and 20 graduate programs to nearly 11,000 students on its 252-acre central campus in Cookeville, Tennessee.



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