

ExxonMobil Foundation Donates to Cowen Institute

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Orleans Parish students at four high schools will get assistance in preparing for college, thanks to a \$1.6 million grant from the ExxonMobil Foundation to the Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University. The funds will help establish an advanced placement training and incentive program over the next five years.

The project was announced at a press conference on Thursday (Oct. 2) at John McDonogh High School, one of the first schools selected for the pilot program, which will provide high school students with advanced placement classes.

On behalf of the [Cowen Institute](#), Tulane President Scott Cowen received the donation from Gerald McElvy, president of the ExxonMobil Foundation. Recovery School District Superintendent Paul Vallas attended the reception along with participating high school principals, teachers and students who will be involved in the program.

"We are very proud to help offer this high-impact program to the students of New Orleans," McElvy said. "Preparing students for college is critical to New Orleans, Louisiana and the nation."

The Advanced Placement Program, administered by the College Board, is one of the leading programs available to prepare high school students for higher education. High school students who do well in AP classes and pass the AP exam attain college-level skills and have the opportunity to obtain college credits.

In collaboration with the National Math and Science Initiative, the Cowen Institute selected a diverse group of high schools in which to implement the program, including John McDonogh, L.E. Rabouin and O. Perry Walker. A fourth school will be selected later this month.

Shannon Jones, executive director of the Cowen Institute, said, "We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform public education in New Orleans. This generous gift from ExxonMobil hastens the day when our school system will serve as a model for other cities around the country."

Components of the program include a Principal Leadership Institute, in which principals from the four high schools will gain the skills to develop a rigorous educational environment that promotes high expectations and college preparedness. Funding also will be provided for current and future AP teachers to attend a series of intensive training sessions for math, science and English from 2008 through 2012.

In addition, the funding will provide AP team training for instructors from different grade levels as well as counselor leadership training. Because school counselors play a critical role in preparing students for college, the Cowen Institute has partnered with the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy to convene the counselors from each of the schools to assess their needs and develop a plan for quarterly one-day workshops.

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