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Education Credit Union Foundation gifts \$500,000 to Amarillo College to support STEM scholarships

Amarillo, Texas – The Education Credit Union Foundation today made a generous and impactful gift of \$500,000 to Amarillo College to establish five endowed scholarships for students in STEM fields – science, technology, engineering or math.

In honor of the gift, the College has co-branded one of its primary learning spaces in its STEM Research Center and christened it the *ECU Foundation STEM Lab*.

The ECU Foundation was launched in 2022 by the Education Credit Union, which in 2024 will open a full-service branch on the Washington Street Campus. Both the ECU and the ECU Foundation are featured in the co-branded room.

Today's gift is earmarked to augment the STEM Scholars Program, a key element in AC's \$45 million comprehensive campaign, Badger Bold. The STEM Scholars Program is an initiative conceived to establish 30 endowed scholarships of \$100,000 each, funding intended to attract the area's brightest STEM scholars.

Through ECU Foundation's contribution of five endowed scholarships, AC and its supporters have now funded 19 of the 30 envisioned scholarships.

"Amarillo College plays a crucial role in building and shaping our community, so we truly are proud to partner with them in this endeavor," ECU Foundation Executive Director Tricia Bass said. "We understand that an investment in STEM education and career development will have long-lasting, positive effects for local students, their families, our business community and the area economy."

AC Vice President of Institutional Advancement Joe Bill Sherrod points out that a number of the College's STEM faculty are engaged in research efforts not typically in evidence at the community college level.

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“Not only that, but our faculty are engaging their students in the research process and providing an exceptional foundation upon which to build future learning experiences,” Sherrod said. “Education Credit Union’s generous contribution affords five STEM students per year the opportunity to research alongside their professors and to present their papers and projects at national conferences. This will make Amarillo College STEM graduates much sought after by four-year institutions.”

Through the STEM Scholars Program, 15 first-year and 15 second-year students will receive approximately \$4,500 in aid per year for up to 60 credit hours at AC. While students’ financial need will be considered, the awards will not be solely based on need; meritorious accomplishments supported by strong references at the high school and/or career levels will be strongly considered.

According to ECU CEO/President and ECU Foundation Board President Marcus Smith, “Amarillo College’s STEM education and development will have a wide-reaching impact on our community’s economic, educational, and social well-being.

“The Education Credit Union Foundation believes in the value of academic learning, and this gift is an investment for such learning,” Smith said.

Students selected to be part of AC’s STEM Scholars Program will major in one of the following disciplines: biology, chemistry, computer science, data science, drafting, engineering, horticulture, mathematics and physics.

“As we prepare students for future careers, STEM-focused pathways will equip students with the skills necessary to meet the challenges of our ever-changing world,” Dean of STEM and Academic Success Edie Carter said. “We are most thankful for the support of our community partners who are providing financial support for our STEM scholars to complete their education at AC and beyond.”

ECU Marketing Director and ECU Foundation Board Director Tiffany Sharpensteen says her delight in supporting the College stems in part from the fact that she got her start at AC.

“We are honored to support Amarillo College’s STEM program with this gift,” Sharpensteen said. “As an Amarillo College alum, it personally gives me immense pride to invest in the future of my alma mater.

“We are also excited about the co-branded STEM classroom that will enhance ECU’s presence on campus, as we eagerly anticipate the opening of our ECU Badger \$mart Branch in 2024,” she said.

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For more information or to contact the foundation, you can visit:

<https://www.ecu-foundation.org>

About Education Credit Union Foundation

Education Credit Union Foundation was formed as a 501(c)(3) in 2022 to carry on Education Credit Union's legacy of philanthropy and community service. The foundation's core values are enabling student success, promoting teacher excellence, and expanding positive impacts in the community. Its vision is to be the trustworthy community resource for educators, students and nonprofits in the Texas Panhandle. ECU Foundation is committed to moving the Panhandle forward. For more, visit: www.ecu-foundation.org

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