

Vento Scholarship awarded to UW-River Falls graduate student

December 17, 2018 - A graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is the 2019 recipient of the Bruce F. Vento Science Educator Scholarship. Charles William Hunter IV, of Mahtomedi, Minn., is pursuing his master's degree and licensure as a secondary school science teacher through the university's *STEMteach* graduate program.

The \$5,000 scholarship, established in 2016 to honor the memory of U.S. Representative Vento, supports students pursuing a science education degree. Before entering Congress, Vento, a UW-River Falls graduate, was a junior high school science and social studies teacher.

Hunter was selected based upon his academic standing and demonstrated financial need, according to Earl Blodgett, physics professor in the UWRF College of Arts and Sciences, program director of the *STEMteach* program and member of the scholarship review committee.

"Charles is going to be an excellent science teacher, definitely following the ideals of the Vento Scholarship," Blodgett said. "He has a wonderful rapport with his students and is dedicated to providing excellent science instruction and mentorship to underprivileged students."

Hunter worked for several years as a school paraprofessional, personal care assistant and tutor before realizing that teaching was his calling. Upon completion of the *STEMteach* program, Hunter plans to teach life science and chemistry in an area school.

"I want to be a mentor for struggling students, as the teachers and professors I had growing up were for me," Hunter said. "I want to encourage students to take the initiative. I would like them to be responsible and take pride in the creation of their own knowledge. Being there to support the students in whichever way they need, I want to create an environment when life skills are learned and STEM practices are preached."

"Being awarded the Bruce F. Vento Science Educator Graduate Scholarship provides me with the necessary financial resources to reach my goals of obtaining my Master of

Science in Education degree and teaching licenses in life science and chemistry,” he added.

All *STEMteach* candidates in good academic standing and enrolled in the winter term of the program are eligible to receive the Vento scholarship. In addition, UW-River Falls also provides qualified students in the program who are willing to teach in economically disadvantaged school districts, a forgivable loan pays for a large portion of their tuition.

The *STEMteach* graduate program began in 2015 and has its fourth cohort of students. The program provides a teacher licensure pathway for candidates who majored in math or science as an undergraduate or who have work experience in any of the science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) fields.

After one year of classes and student teaching, students are eligible for a Wisconsin teaching license to teach science, math, or computer science in middle or high schools. The program of study includes early hands-on experience in teaching and the option to continue studies to earn a Master of Science in education degree.

UW-River Falls is accepting applications for the fifth cohort of the *STEMteach* program which begins in summer 2018. For more information about *STEMteach* or the Vento scholarship, email pamela.bowen@uwrf.edu or visit <http://go.uwrf.edu/STEMteach>.

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Headshot attached.