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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Heritage University Awarded Nearly \$4 Million to Help More Educationally Underrepresented People Become Teachers, Earn Doctorate Degrees**

Toppenish, Wash. – Heritage University has been awarded two more United States Department of Education grants worth \$3.9 million to improve the academic achievements by people from historically underrepresented populations in the Yakima Valley. The first, a five-year, \$2.7 million Title V grant, will be used to develop an enhanced teacher preparation program designed to attract more Hispanic students to become elementary and middle school teachers. This program will include an enhanced effort to prepare these students to teach with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The second, a five-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, will be used to increase the number of doctorate degrees earned by populations underrepresented in graduate studies. The McNair Program also aims to diversify faculty at universities when McNair scholars who have earned PhDs join those institutions as professors.

The \$2.7 million Title V grant is part of the Department of Education's Developing Hispanic-Serving Institution (DHSI) Program, which provides grants to help Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) like Heritage University, to expand educational opportunities for, and improve degree attainment by Hispanic students. These grants also enable HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality and institutional stability. This grant will be coordinated by Dr. Corey McKenna, professor of education and Dr. Ricardo Valdez, Title V STEM Director.

Dr. Laurie Fathe, Heritage University provost, says in the past, resource constraints have made it challenging for Heritage to expand recruitment of students and teachers in STEM fields. "We are excited for the opportunities these two new grants offer. They will provide Heritage with the resources to recruit and provide a cutting edge education to future STEM teachers and professionals," said Dr. Fathe.

To address these priorities, Heritage University will enhance its Theory to Practice teaching preparation program to include a STEM track. This enhancement includes STEM summer institutes for partner district mentor teachers (conducted by the University of Washington), summer STEM camp for partner student districts, year-

long field experiences and STEM apprentice teaching and a restructured beginning teacher program.

The awarding of McNair means a return of the program to Heritage University, which last received the grant in 2013. A total of 25 McNair scholars will be served at Heritage. Two-thirds of the scholars will include low-income, first-generation college students; the remainder will be drawn from student demographics, such as Hispanics and Native Americans that have been traditionally underrepresented in graduate education. The scholars will receive a variety of academic and support services which include research and scholarly activities, summer internships, tutoring and mentoring, graduate school preparation courses and workshops. The scholars will be required to take three courses that will prepare them for graduate records examinations (GRE).

"I am very excited for all of the opportunities our students at Heritage will have through the McNair Program," said Dr. Melvin Simoyi, associate biology professor and Title V STEM HU Project director. "The training, mentoring and assistance they will receive will increase their ability to earn a doctorate degree in their field of study."

"The Department of Education's award of these multi-million dollar grants to Heritage, is a reflection of the agency's confidence in our ability to provide meaningful academic opportunities for the people of the Yakima Valley," said Heritage University President Dr. Andrew Sund. "The funding from Title V and McNair will help us continue our mission."

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