

Hard work rewarded

FVSU professor
awarded \$10,000
national grant

By AYANNA MCPHAIL
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FORT VALLEY — A Fort Valley State University professor has received a National Science Foundation award that comes with a \$10,000 grant.

Sarwan K. Dhir, associate professor of biotechnology, recently traveled to Washington, where he was one of 10 individuals presented with the 2005 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

The award honors individuals and institutions that have enhanced the participation of underrepresented groups — including women and people of color — in the fields of science, math and engineering, the foundation said.

The 2005 winners are from institutions across the country and represent a variety of professional fields. All the winners are highly regarded mentors and have pioneered innovative and resourceful programs, the foundation said.

When Dhir came to FVSU in 1995, he was a longtime researcher who never saw himself as a teacher. It wasn't until he began informally helping students with lab work that he decided to become a professor, he said.

Now he mentors students at the historically black university in Fort Valley and has created several programs for students ranging from middle school age to the college graduate level.

"If it wasn't for Dr. Dhir's guidance and collaborative research opportunity programs, I would have never entered this profession," Kaye M. Knowles stated in a letter of recommendation. She's a graduate student and full-time research technician at FVSU.

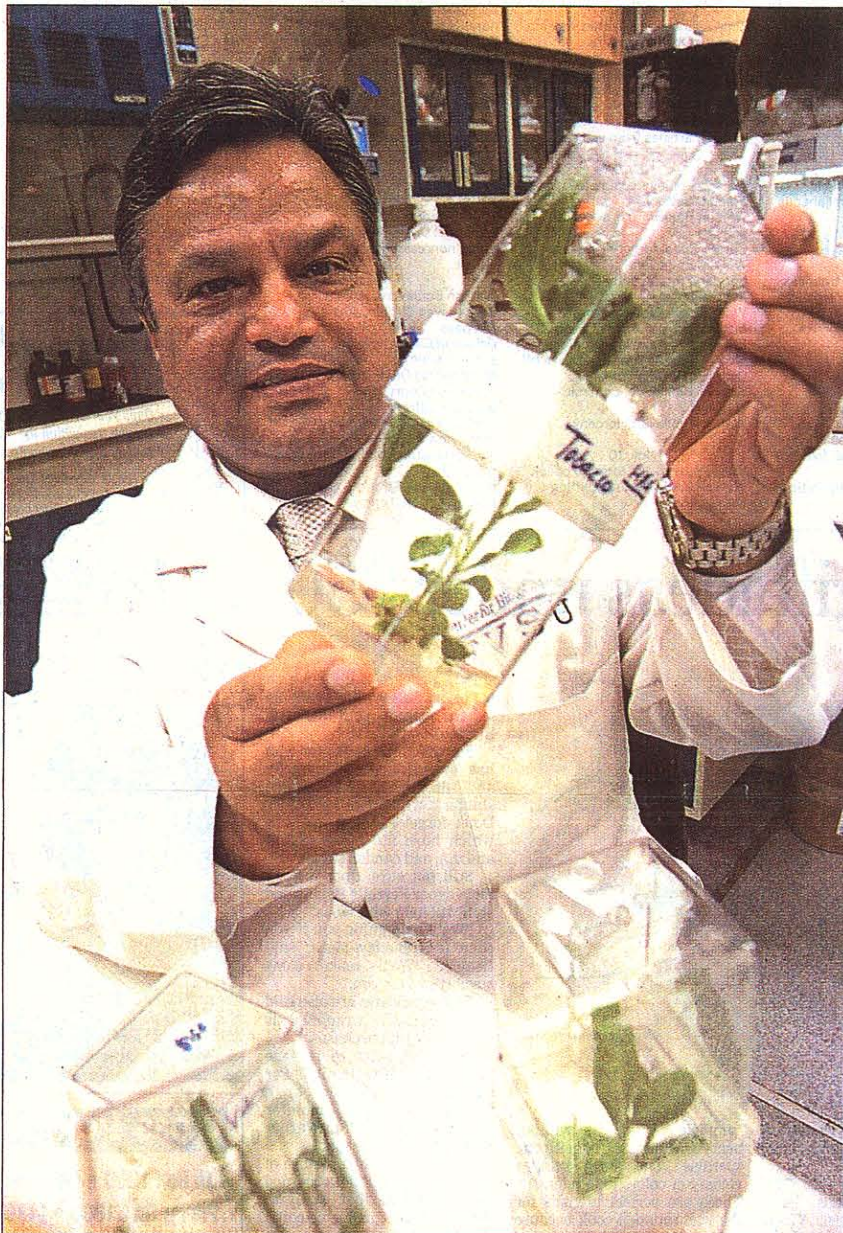
Knowles participated in a collaborative grant program started by Dhir. The program enabled her to do research at the University of Minnesota, she said.

Students can go to other large institutions to do research depending on their areas of interest, Dhir said. His students also have works published in international scientific journals, Dhir said.

Since 1997, Dhir has obtained \$4.5 million in grants to support his initiatives, he said.

Students in middle school work with Dhir on ideas for projects that they choose. Sometimes they take trips to a scientific meeting or enter state and regional science fairs to present their research.

His students collectively have won 198 awards and made



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Kaye M. Knowles, graduate student and full-time research technician at FVSU, in a letter of recommendation



Above, Sarwan Dhir, at a Fort Valley State University laboratory on Monday, has received a National Science Foundation award. From left, John H. Marburger, director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and science advisor to President Bush, Dhir and Arden L. Bement, director at the National Science Foundation. The ceremony was at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

DHIR

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190 presentations, according to Fort Valley State. There are summer programs for high school and college students where they do lab

work and take field trips. Every year, Dhir offers scholarships to retain and attract students to the science fields. Work study programs also are available.

Dhir hopes to expand his initiatives to the National Institutes of Health, where students may be able

to do lab work and train to become medical researchers.

He created the biotechnology major because he saw an opportunity for a niche that his students could fill. Professionals in this field may study DNA found at crime scenes or study cloning, he said.

Other winners include professionals from Stanford University, Boise State University and the University of California, Berkeley.

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