

## Grants open doors for FVSU students

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**FORT VALLEY** - Aspiring scientist Betsy Ampofo is among a select group of African Americans participating in an internship or educational program linked to her field.

The plant science-biotechnology major at Fort Valley State University said she is thankful for the opportunities supported by grants awarded to her school.

FVSU recently received nearly \$700,000 in grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Science Foundation that will be used for 42 annual scholarships over the next several years.

The grants increase the number of African Americans enabled to pursue her area of study, said Ampofo, a native of Ghana in west Africa.

Fort Valley State continues to lure students to its competitive program by awarding money to students so they may not have to worry about holding down a job while maintaining good grades, said Sarwan K. Dhir, associate professor of biotechnology at the university. Dhir is instrumental in applying for the grants.

As the university's president, Larry E. Rivers, focuses on increasing enrollment and retaining students, Dhir believes the scholarships will help in that effort.

"It's not just recruiting the students, it's helping retain them for four years and graduate from Fort Valley," the professor said. "This money is an incentive to stay."

The National Science Foundation awarded \$484,400 and the USDA granted \$199,334 to the school.

The USDA grant is for the university's Enhancement of Minority Student Recruitment and Retention in Agricultural Biotechnology program.

The \$3,500 a year will help majors like Ampofo who plan to pursue research careers after completing graduate studies. Biotechnology can be used to extend the shelf life of vegetables or make plants resistant to insects, she explained.

Students with her major can pursue careers at a pharmaceutical company, the Centers for Disease Control or private industry.

"You can do a variety of things with the major depending on your personal goals in life," Ampofo said.