

Barnard College's *Brownfield Action* Curriculum to be Adopted by Connecticut College

Monday, October 29

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New York, NY (March 31, 2004)— *Brownfield Action*, the innovative curriculum developed by Barnard environmental scientist Peter Bower, will be introduced at a second liberal arts college, Connecticut College, with support from the National Science Foundation, which has awarded a \$75,000 "proof-of-concept" grant to expand the program.

The program, developed by Bower in cooperation with the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL), will be adapted to upper-level environmental science and geophysics studies courses at Connecticut College. The web-based, two-week interactive feature will introduce students to the *Brownfield Action* interface, history, and to the assignment. Students will have web access to the program in residence halls, computer centers, and the library. Professor Doug Thompson, who attended a seminar at Barnard for faculty development and dissemination of *Brownfield Action* last year, will integrate the program at Connecticut College to their existing curriculum. Bower and CCNMTL will provide overall management and support for this pilot program.

"The NSF grant will help us to test the effectiveness of this innovative pedagogy at another liberal arts college. At Connecticut College, the *Brownfield Action* module will allow the upper-level science students to use this web-based simulation of a real-life groundwater investigation. Our goal is to disseminate *Brownfield Action*, or parts of it, at other colleges, high schools, and even offer it for governmental and business uses," said Bower.

Brownfield Action, developed and launched by Bower in 1999, is a multimedia model for teaching introductory environmental science. Students work in teams and compete against each other using an interactive computer program, in which they act as environmental consultants to assess a simulated contaminated site. The curriculum, along with the simulation and lab exercises, integrates contemporary readings such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Jonathan Harr's *Civil Action*. Students gain a working knowledge of principles of geology, environmental science, physics, and biology, as well as historical, legal and political knowledge gained in the classroom.

If the Connecticut College pilot program is successful, Bower said, the *Brownfield Action* project will be considered for additional NSF funding to help promote a major distribution and development of the program to other schools and institutions.

"The NSF proof-of-concept funding will allow Barnard and CCNMTL to begin the process of taking what has been a very successful Barnard/CCNMTL project and make it available to all interested in enhancing the teaching of environmental science," said Frank Moretti, Executive Director of CCNMTL.

A *Brownfield Action* website is also under development, according to Bower. The site will be utilized to further promote the curriculum and its associated course materials, and will be used as an information vehicle for the pilot program at Connecticut College.

Brownfield Action was recently selected for the Science for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER) program as a national model for science education by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

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