

Data shows STCC offers value, affordability, opportunities

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. – When he was deciding where to attend college, Mohamed Gabriel considered starting at a four-year university. But he ultimately decided to enroll at one of the most affordable higher education institutions in the region: Springfield Technical Community College.

“The expenses I would have been faced with (at a four-year university) would’ve forced me out of school for sure,” said Gabriel, of West Springfield.



Mohamed Gabriel

At STCC, Gabriel not only stayed in school and kept his expenses down, he thrived. He graduated with honors from STCC in May with an associate degree in engineering and science transfer. His next step is to pursue a bachelor’s degree. He plans to enroll at a four-year university this fall.

“I’m glad I made the decision to attend STCC, because compared to a four-year university, I ended up earning my associate degree at the cost of just one year at a four-year school – all while I was able to work and support my family,” Gabriel said. “I met and know a lot of students who chose to come to STCC mainly for its affordability as well as its excellent programs.”

Starting at STCC and then transferring to a four-year college or university will keep more money in the student’s pocket than enrolling directly at a four-year institution as a freshman. Data from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education shows precisely how much students will save by starting at STCC.

During fiscal 2019, tuition and fees for a full-time student at STCC totaled \$6,306. The fiscal year ran from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

During that same time span, students at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst paid \$16,278 a year for tuition and fees.

Some STCC students with plans

to transfer save money by taking advantage of Commonwealth Commitment, a statewide program that provides financial incentives to students who begin at STCC and then transfer to a state public college or university, including UMass. For example, a Commonwealth Commitment student who started at STCC in fall 2018 and finishes at UMass in spring 2022 will pay \$36,864 in tuition and fees for an associate and bachelor’s degree (not including room and board).

College President John B. Cook said STCC – because of its low cost and unique programs – is an appealing choice for families in the region interested in many different education goals.

“As a technical community college, we are one of the most affordable options, with significant pathways into key fields that include health care, computer science, engineering and the creative economy that includes graphic arts. We provide the most direct access point to higher education for our communities, including first-generation college students, students of color and low-income families.” Cook said. “Nearly 80 percent of our students receive some form of financial aid.”

While some take out loans, community college students have fewer student loans than students in other types of institutions, according to a 2011 study of national post-secondary student aid.

Student Yanira Aviles, of Springfield, said her first semester at STCC was free with help from financial aid programs



Yanira Aviles

available at the college. She didn’t graduate from high school and took classes at STCC to earn her high school equivalency diploma (HiSET).

She works on campus helping students apply for federal student aid and for the upcoming 2019-2020 academic year was elected to serve as

Student Trustee to the Board of Trustees, a governing body which works with the president on fiscal oversight and long-range planning.

“I came in here with what I had – and I didn’t have anything,” Aviles said. “If it wasn’t for STCC’s programs, I don’t think I’d be here.”

The programs at STCC designed to support students include but are not limited to:

The Center for Access Services, which provides a broad range of non-academic support such as a food pantry for students struggling to make ends meet;

TRIO Student Support Services, which helps students adjust to the college environment and assists with applying for scholarships. TRIO helps students whose parents did not go to college, have a disability or come from low-income families (or any combination of the three);

Tutoring, which includes student and professional academic tutors;

Adult Basic Education Services, which offers free classes for adults to prepare for the high school equivalency test and to learn English;

Gateway to College, a dual enrollment partnership with the Springfield Public Schools that gives high school students the chance to earn free college credit while working toward their diplomas;

Society of Women Engineers at STCC, which gives voice to students in engineering and related STEM fields; and

STEM Starter Academy, which allows recent high school graduates to receive free college courses and earn credits before they start the first semester.

The college and the STCC Foundation offer plenty of scholarship opportunities. The Foundation and college provided \$1.1 million to support students in fiscal 2019.

Maria Ramos, of Agawam, earned an associate degree in biotechnology in May and said she used her scholarship money to pay off loans. “This is going to help me out so much,” she said about the scholarship.

Gabriel, the student who considered a four-year university but decided on STCC in part because of its affordability, received a total



Maria Ramos

of 11 scholarships. As he prepares to continue his educational journey in the fall at another institution, he looked back fondly at his STCC experience.

“Considering the socioeconomic structure of Springfield, STCC plays a crucial role in improving people’s lives,” Gabriel said. “Because of its affordability as well as its flexibility with class schedules, majors and programs, it’s the smarter choice to make.”

Interested in applying to STCC? Visit stcc.edu/apply or call Admissions at (413) 755-3333.

About Springfield Technical Community College

Founded in 1967 and located on 35 acres of the Springfield Armory National Historic Site, STCC is a major resource for the economic vitality of Western Massachusetts. As one of the most affordable colleges in the region, STCC provides access to higher education for a diverse population, including first-generation college students from low-income families.

A designated Hispanic Serving Institution, an Achieving the Dream Leader College and the only technical community college in Massachusetts, STCC offers a variety of career programs unequalled in the state. STCC’s highly regarded transfer programs in business, engineering, liberal arts, science and technology continue to provide the most economical options for students pursuing a four-year degree.

For more information about STCC, visit www.stcc.edu. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@S_T_C_C) and Instagram (@stccpics).