

## High School, STCC expand partnership

Springfield Technical Community College and West Springfield High School have broadened a dual enrollment partnership in advanced manufacturing and created a new academic pathway to a career in health care.

WSHS students now can choose to take college-level courses in health science as part of the Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership Grant, awarded to STCC in September.

The \$39,856 grant also broadens the course offerings available to students in advanced manufacturing, which include classes from STCC's engineering technology programs.

For the past six years, WSHS students have participated in dual enrollment in advanced manufacturing. WSHS, in partnership with STCC and the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, was recently designated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as an Innovations Pathway institution in recognition of the Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) program that combines academics with preparation for a career in advanced manufacturing.

• Please Turn to Page 7

## Partnership

• Continued from Page 1

"The partnership that the West Springfield Public Schools—and specifically West Springfield High School—have established with Springfield Technical Community College is remarkable and expanding," said Superintendent Michael Richard. "The dual enrollment opportunities that are provided to our students make their high school experience more meaningful and valuable in terms of financial and educational benefits.

"Between the work we do together relating to our Innovation Pathways program and the ongoing engagement that this presents with community business leaders, the stakeholders at both WSHS and STCC are benefiting greatly. Of most importance is the fact that students are the priority and are receiving complementary educational experiences," Mr. Richard added.

STCC President John B. Cook said the partnership with West Springfield Public Schools gives students an affordable pathway to college.

"We want West Springfield high school students to have an affordable access point to a unique institution," Mr. Cook said. "A dual enrollment program like P2P will open a doorway for students who might be the first in their family to go to college. They might come from a family that thinks college is too expensive, but STCC is the most affordable option in Springfield, and P2P makes it even easier to earn college credits in fields where companies are

paying good salaries."

In Brogan Brodsky's view, P2P offers many benefits and opportunities. A senior at WSHS, he is in his fourth year of the dual enrollment program. Mr. Brodsky said P2P not only gave him a chance to take STCC classes at no cost, but also connected him with an internship at a manufacturing company this past summer.

"The program helps to broaden people's perspectives on the engineering field. You get a chance to take tours of area manufacturing companies and see how they operate," Mr. Brodsky said. "When I first went into it, I thought engineering technology was about standing behind a machine and making parts all day. But that's not really the case. It encompasses many different fields."

Mr. Brodsky plans to enroll at STCC next fall and pursue his associate degree in electrical engineering technology. Thanks to the credits he received while in high school, he will be on track to graduate after just one year.

West Springfield public schools serve more than 4,000 students. WSHS Principal Vito Perrone said 44.5% of the students are economically disadvantaged. Thirty-one percent do not speak English as their first language.

"These numbers reflect the need of the school district to tend to students who may not have a clear pathway to post-secondary education, making our participation in the Dual Enrollment program critical and helping us to ensure that these potentially at-risk students don't fall behind," Dr. Perrone said.

The partnership between STCC and

WSHS will focus on providing low-income and students of color with the opportunity to enter into one of these pathways. Up to 30 students will have the opportunity to take up to 15 credits at STCC. WSHS will recruit 10 students for advanced manufacturing and 20 for health care.

Dr. Perrone said, "As an Innovation Pathway high school, WSHS understands and appreciates the importance of dual enrollment programs, particularly for high demand fields such as healthcare and advanced manufacturing. By increasing awareness of post-secondary opportunities and expanding the population of college-ready students in Massachusetts, we feel we will provide our students with the best opportunity to succeed post-graduation."

Students will receive access to the college's support network including tutoring, mentoring, and library research. STCC and the High School will provide students with opportunities to gain information on how to apply for college and sessions for parents and students on pursuing financial aid and other funding sources to pay for college.

STCC Dean of Academic Initiatives Matt Gravel said the creation of the health science pathway will help meet a demand.

"We have had a thriving advanced manufacturing pathway, but we found that the majority of West Springfield

High School students were interested in a health career," Mr. Gravel said.

In 2018, STCC created a health science program that provides students with a medical certification during their first year as a certified nursing assistant, an emergency medical technician or a sterile processor. The certifications allow students to work in the medical field before they have graduated to get a sense of the field.

WSHS dual enrollment students will be able to take field trips to local businesses and participate in summer internships.

Students will receive college credits at no cost to them and will also receive high school credits for courses taken at STCC that align with high school requirements.

The grant will also pay for bus passes so students can get from the high school to STCC and for stipends to pay for books.

"We want to thank you for your commitment to increasing college participation through dual enrollment activities, particularly for low-income, underrepresented, and first-generation college students," Gov. Charlie Baker and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito wrote in a letter to President Cook. "Through this funding and your continued support, we hope to expand access to great educational opportunities for every student in the Commonwealth."