STEM Program to Aid Underserved Students

January 16, 2012 by Nicholas Spangler / nicholas.spangler@newsday.com

Students in nearly a dozen low- and moderate-income Long Island school districts will have an opportunity to take an enrichment program in science and math starting this summer through an initiative offered by Farmingdale State College and its academic and business partners.

Photo credit: Newsday/Karen Wiles Stabile | On left, Mark J. Grossman, commissioner's Long Island regional representative, NYS Department of Labor, gestures to (right to left) Nada Anid, Dean, School of Engineering, NYIT, and Pat Edwards, Citi Community Development, as they lead the working session on Global Business at the Long Island STEM Hub Summit meeting held at Farmingdale State College. (Dec. 6, 2011)

Officials with the Farmingdale State College STEM Diversity Roundtable – STEM stands for science, technology and math – hope to attract 330 students this year, part of a statewide initiative to prepare students to work in high-tech fields.

The school districts include Amityville, Wyandanch, Hempstead, Westbury, Copiague, Elmont, Freeport, Roosevelt, Huntington and Uniondale.

"These schools are underserved," said Veronica Henry, a Farmingdale administrator and the Roundtable's leader. "We want to make a difference at these districts and give their students an edge."

In the Amityville district, for example, Superintendent John Williams said many students come from the impoverished hamlet of North Amityville, and test scores typically lag state averages. Williams said the program is welcome.

"If there's an upside to having depressed scores in this area, this is it," he said, referring to student participation in the STEM program. "It's an initiative we've been concerned about: historically, our graduates have not been going into these fields."

College officials said they are close to finalizing a $100,000 state grant to fund the program. The grant will be from the $101.6 million in state aid announced in December for initiatives deemed economic or job engines on Long Island.

At a STEM conference hosted by Farmingdale last month, teachers and leaders from business and government said their goal was to create a pipeline for STEM-literate students into industries such as energy and environment, homeland security, advanced manufacturing and global business.

"By making connections early on with business, students can identify career opportunities and help reverse the oft-cited 'brain drain' taking place on Long Island," Ken White, manager of Brookhaven National Lab's Office of Educational Programs, said in a news release after the conference.

Students and parents with questions can contact Henry's office at 631-420-2622.

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