

## HCC, WSU get grants for high school partnership

In an effort to help high schools students prepare for success in college, the state boards of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education recently gave “preliminary” designation status to 21 early college programs, and awarded more than \$80,000 in grants to public colleges, universities and high schools in the midst of developing early college programs, the Baker-Polito Administration announced today.

Two of those programs, involving Holyoke Community College and Westfield State University, involve partnerships with Holyoke public high schools.

The \$10,000 competitive planning grants will help schools become “designated” early college programs by the boards of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education. Schools granted preliminary designation are expected to apply for final designation in February, with the goal of launching programs this fall.

“Early college programs are crucial for exposing students to the opportunities higher-education can create and with these designations, more students will be able to earn college credits at no cost,” Gov. Charlie Baker said. “We are pleased to work with these school

districts to expand or launch early college programs so their students are better prepared for successful academic and professional careers after high school.”

Included for funding is a new early college program that will enable Holyoke students to earn up to 12 college credits at HCC before their high school graduation. Students enrolled in the program will complete at least two core courses taught by HCC at its Holyoke campus, and a minimum of two technical courses.

Also included is the Westfield Promise program, in which enrollees from Holyoke, Springfield and Westfield high schools will take at least two college courses, team-taught by high school and college faculty. In 12th grade, students will then take two college courses at Westfield State to become acclimated to college life before graduating from high school.

“Successful early college programs boost college completion rates for students by preparing them with challenging college-level courses,” said Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito. “We are happy to be able to offer these grants that will help create high-quality early college programs for more students across the commonwealth.”

Successful early college programs make college

more accessible to low-income students by giving them an opportunity to learn in college-level courses while at the same time earning college credits, at no cost, which helps ease their financial burdens later, according to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Early college has also been shown to boost college completion rates for low-income students, minorities and first-generation college-goers.

“By creating designated early college programs, we are breaking down barriers between high school and higher education and creating a more seamless path for students to move to college and careers,” Education Secretary James Peyser said. “Successful early college programs do more than just prepare a student theoretically; they make students realize college is an achievable goal for them by exposing them to college-level work and college credits before they graduate high school.”

Last March, Governor Charlie Baker announced efforts to significantly increase the number of early college seats available to high school students. Currently there are approximately 2,400 students enrolled in early college programs around the state.

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