

NECC Receives Grant to Develop Culinary and Mechatronics Programs

On Friday, March 3, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced a \$500,000 grant that will benefit Northern Essex Community College students in the new culinary arts certificate program and in a developing mechatronics program.

The grant provides funding for new equipment for both programs.

The Workforce Skills Capital Grants program was created by the Baker-Polito Administration last year to assist educational institutions in demonstrating partnerships with industry and aligning curriculum and credentials with local businesses' demand, maximizing planning objectives and hiring or internship opportunities regionally. Northern Essex has identified culinary arts and mechatronics as two skill sets in the Merrimack Valley that are in high demand among local employers.

“Working in partnership with Whittier Vocational Technical High School, Endicott College and Merrimack Valley employers Northern Essex has focused on creating two programs that will train individuals for these high-demand jobs,” said NECC President Lane Glenn.

On the culinary side, \$150,000 will be used for the purchase and installation of commercial restaurant equipment including countertop stoves, ranges, convection ovens, fryers, griddles, mixers, walk-in cooler and freezer, and banquet tables and chairs. In addition computers with hotel and restaurant related software will be used to train students in the areas of inventory control, recipe building, event planning, and hotel management.

“It is the same equipment that culinary employees in the workplace use,” said Kelly Sullivan, dean of Technology, Arts Professional Studies & Science Division.

The recently approved culinary arts certificate program will be located in a yet to be determined downtown Haverhill location beginning within the next two years.

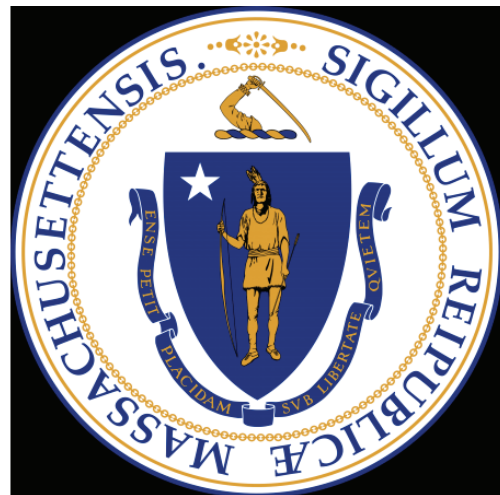
Northern Essex has been working with Whittier and Endicott to create seamless educational pathways in the culinary and hospitality fields.

Vo-tech students can take courses at Whittier or at NECC and receive concurrent credit enabling students to enter the program with 9 to 12 college credits, which puts them ahead academically with a tuition savings, too.

Under an evolving articulation agreement between NECC and Endicott College, students graduating from NECC's Business Management: Hospitality Associate Degree program will transfer into Endicott's bachelor's program matriculating as a junior. Endicott is also developing plans to offer courses at the Haverhill hospitality/ culinary location.

Over the last year, Northern Essex President Lane Glenn has met with local restaurant owners and managers and received their input on key topics like career opportunities, curriculum content, and equipment.

NECC will further spur job creation by making the kitchen available to entrepreneurs, small vendors, as well as local training providers.



Advanced manufacturing is the other high demand area of employment. Northern Essex will use \$350,000 to purchase mechatronic equipment to be used by students in a mechatronic certificate program being developed in partnership with Greater Lawrence Technical School, where the equipment will be installed. Mechatronics cuts across several disciplines already being taught at Lawrence Tech including electricity, engineering, and electronics.

The program will combine training in computer electronic systems, industrial electricity, and mechanical functionalities. Students and incumbent workers will acquire skills to trouble shoot and perform preventative maintenance. A survey of 200 local companies conducted last year by the Lawrence Partnership, identified this as a significant skills gap meaning local employers cannot find skilled workers to fill open positions that require these skills.

NECC and Lawrence Tech have already created pathways that enable tech students to gain college credit while in high school. The mechatronics training program will be incorporated into NECC's advanced manufacturing initiatives, which offer credits leading to a certificate and to an associate degree.

“We have an acute demand for skilled workers, as documented in the Workforce Investment Board's Strategic Plan,” wrote Darren Scandone, senior vice president of human resources at NxStage Medical and Anita Worden, CEO of Yaskawa Solecra Renewable, in a letter of support of the grant program.

The Baker-Polito Administration awarded \$11.8 million in Workforce Skills Capital Grants to 32 vocational schools, community colleges, and traditional public high schools, which will use the funds to purchase vocational technical equipment and expand skills training programs for careers in growing industries.