

Energy and Education two peas in a Capital Region pod

By DAN SABBATINO

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Energy, technology and education have become intertwined in the Capital District, and as the school year kicks off, more initiatives are being pushed to the front of the line.

A state energy research authority is offering \$100,000 scholarship program at Hudson Valley Community College designed to promote research toward green energy.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority will go to students studying an array of fields, including, photovoltaic, wind, alternative fuel vehicles, and geothermal fields.

HVCC and Ballston Spa Central School District also announced the start of its Clean Technologies and Sustainable Industries Early College High School program, a college-level curriculum for students created to promote college and career readiness and promote renewable energy as a subject to study, and make a career of.

A lot of factors culminated into the growth of the region, officials said.

“The acceleration of clean technology and the related fields...you can seed the seeds in the region come from the Center for Economic Growth,” said Joseph Dragone, superintendent of the Ballston Spa Central School District.

He said its important to continue to building and strengthen partnerships between schools, business and government.

“We’re at this point for a reason,” Dragone said. “The catalysts are finally in place.”

The \$100,000 award is planned to be used toward as many as 20 scholarships to HVCC students studying clean-energy at the TEC-SMART site in Malta. Individual students can receive as much as \$5,000 over two years of study clean energy if they can keep maintain a grade-point average above 2.75, live in state at the time of application and meet other qualifications, according to information from the partnership.

“At a time when jobs are being created in the renewable energy industry, this scholarship program and HVCC’s clean-tech program for high school students will encourage even more people to join this growing field,” said Francis Murray, president and chief executive officer of NYSERDA. “HVCC’s clean-energy programs and its exceptional TEC-SMART building in Malta provide wonderful learning opportunities as the community college helps develop the skilled workforce we need to expand New York State’s clean-energy economy.”

HVCC President Andrew Matonak said the college has worked hard to try to ready students for the ever-changing workforce.

“One of our goals at Hudson Valley has long been to create the workforce for the clean energy jobs in what has become known as the Tech Valley,” said Matonak. “We’ve taken a huge step toward that goal with the opening of the world-renowned TEC-SMART facility. Now, scholarship funding from NYSERDA will help us to move a step closer by offering a strong incentive to students considering these career fields. Hudson Valley is grateful for NYSERDA’s support.”

A total of 25 juniors and seniors from Ballston Spa and Saratoga Springs are enrolled for the fall semester in the Clean Technologies and Sustainable Industries Early College High School program. Courses will be held at TEC-SMART and taught by Ballston Spa High School teachers as well as HVCC professors.

“We truly appreciate the support of our partners as we drive innovation in our sector, support college and career readiness for all students and firmly establish the critical link between K-12 education, higher education and economic development,” said Dragone.

Dragone said job placement and college readiness is the focus.

The program was created by HVCC and Ballston Spa, and was given a \$167,394 Smart Scholars Early College High School grant from the New York State Education Department, according to a statement. Saratoga Springs Central School District has also joined the program and the program is expected to be open to other districts next year.

The program allows students to earn more than 20 college credits during their junior and senior years while also working toward high school diplomas.

“Environmental technologies, nanotechnology, sustainable design, nano-economics, green economy, renewable energy public policy and related field experiences, including involvement with clean-energy businesses,” will be studied, as well as solar power systems and environmental ethics.