

REB Connections

NEWS FROM THE METRO NORTH REGIONAL
EMPLOYMENT BOARD, CAMBRIDGE, MA

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Richard Freeland meets with REB to discuss Vision Project



Massachusetts Commissioner of the Board of Higher Education Richard M. Freeland recently met with the Metro North REB to discuss the Vision Project, a bold new statewide initiative that is designed to enhance the quality and accessibility of the state's higher education system. In developing the Vision Project, Freeland and his team first sought to identify the most important objectives that the state needs higher education to fulfill. The answer they formulated, Freeland said, is "to produce the best educated workforce and citizenry in the country," and "to position the state as a national leader in research that drives economic development." Freeland asserted that in today's economy, a strong, unified system of public higher education is critical to the economic well-being of the state. He pointed out that while soon the vast majority of all jobs will require a college degree, graduates of Massachusetts colleges are leaving the state at an increasing rate. The future workforce of Massachusetts, he argued, will come from the state's system of higher education. "We need to change the equation by getting the state to see more

clearly the public policy importance of this system...and, by getting this highly decentralized system to see that it needs to find a way to behave as a system if it's going to communicate its importance to the state," Freeland said.

The ambitious goals of the project include: increasing college attendance and graduation rates; implementing accurate assessment tools to ensure that high school students are ready for advanced work; aligning degree programs with the workforce needs of the state; and eliminating racial, ethnic and economic disparities with respect to all of these outcomes. Freeland said that a report on the initiative will likely be published in 2012.

Healthcare Skills Gap Partnership program graduates secure employment

The Metro North REB is pleased to announce that the first round of graduates of its Healthcare Skills Gap Partnership training program are now employed in the healthcare field, having been placed in positions at Tufts Medical Center, Emerson Hospital, and Melrose-Wakefield Hospital. With funding from the Commonwealth Corporation, the Partnership -- a consortium of healthcare institutions, a community college, and career centers in the Metro North region -- is overseeing the enrollment of local unemployed and incumbent workers in a phlebotomist training program. The second cycle of students are currently enrolled in the program and will be placed in positions in the spring of 2011.

Welcome New Board Members!

The REB is pleased to announce the recent appointment of the following individuals to the Board:



Kimberly Smith-Cofield
Executive Director
Community Action
Agency of Somerville



Charlene Bauer
Senior Vice President
Metro Credit Union

Career Paths in STEM forum draws crowd



There was standing room only at the December STEM forum, held at Career Source in Cambridge. Hosted by the Metro North Career Centers, the forum featured speakers who are working in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and who represent companies that include: Vertex, Just-A-Start, Biogen Idec, Vecna, and Everett Credit Union. Each presenter spoke to the audience of local youth about their organizations, some of the highlights of working in their fields, and their

sometimes unpredictable career paths. Speaker Janis Caines, Vice President of Operations and Administration at Everett Credit Union, said that despite being an “average student” in high school, she worked her way up from part-time receptionist to vice president of her company. Caines stressed that students shouldn’t feel that they need to know everything before they enter the workforce. “What matters is that you show up, you are on time, you maintain a positive attitude, and you work hard....as for confidence, that will come.” The forum is one element of the Metro North REB’s comprehensive strategy to increase youth interest in the STEM fields, and to connect local schools with industry in the region. Other components of the strategy include the Metro North STEM Partnership (see article below), and the development of a web-based collection of local STEM-related initiatives and resources, slated to be launched in the spring of 2011.



New STEM partnership to build local workforce capacity, empower youth

Following on the heels of the successful forum, “Best Practices in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)” held this past summer, the REB is pleased to announce the launch of the Metro North STEM Partnership. The Partnership, which is comprised of 30 leaders in industry and education from throughout the Metro North region, will serve as a catalyst to revitalize local interest and leadership in the STEM fields. At its first meeting in October, representatives from industry, community colleges, and the Metro North Career Centers explored local workforce needs, challenges and resources. The next meeting, to be held in early 2011, will include leadership from many local school districts, and will focus on establishing partnerships that will support effective, sustainable STEM programming throughout the Metro North region.

Metro North Regional Employment Board
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140
Phone: (617) 864 -1500
Fax: (617) 864 -1508
info@mnreb.org / www.mnreb.org