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Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno's Tour Highlights Partnership Between Higher Education And Somerset County Academy for Health and Medical Sciences

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Collaboration Affords Early College Credits Focused On Career Interests

Trenton, NJ – Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today continued her tour of New Jersey's Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools with a visit to the Somerset County Academy for Health and Medical Sciences in Bridgewater. Somerset County Vocational Technical School (SCVTS) has a collaborative arrangement with Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) that enables students, upon graduation, to advance toward four- or five-year college programs and enter as juniors in their career choice.

"For students who know what their career path will be after high school, CTE programs offer the opportunity to pursue a dual credit track," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "This important collaboration between Raritan Valley Community College and the Somerset County Academy for Health and Medical Sciences allows students to obtain an Associate's Degree in the General Sciences and establishes a pathway for them to enter into a four-year college program with advanced credits."

The Academy for Health and Medical Sciences is a "school" within a school and is located at Somerset County Vocational Technical High School. The program began in the 2006-2007 school year with 31 students in grade 9.

Each year, the school accepts approximately 36 freshman students. Students go through a rigorous admissions process including review of standardized tests and GPAs. They also sit for an admissions test, which tests students' writing, language arts, mathematics and science knowledge and skills. Accepted students enter the ninth grade year as a cohort and progress through an intensive four-year course of study. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in order to remain in the program.

Tuition is charged for college courses and is paid by the sending district and the students' parents. Financial assistance is given to those demonstrating need. Teaching staff consists of faculty from both SCVTS and RVCC. Faculty members of Raritan Valley Community College also provide academic support to the students in the dual program.

Upon graduation, 100% of students that participated in this program attend a four-year college or university. The list of colleges that accept these students is both lengthy and impressive.

Lt. Governor Guadagno was accompanied on her visit to Somerset County Vocational School's campus by New Jersey Commissioner of Labor Harold J. Wirths and Marie Barry, director of the state Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education. The state officials met with students, educators and representatives of the school and RVCC to learn more about the dual credit program.

"The latest data show the rate of unemployment last year for young people, ages 16 to 19, was three times that of older adults," said Commissioner Wirths. "We must ensure young people obtain the skills that New Jersey's major industries are helping us all to identify as crucial to successful careers. Early collaborations between colleges and high schools, as well as the involvement of employers in the educational process, are important to that success."

School representatives who took part in the tour included Dr. Chrys Harttraft, superintendent of Somerset County Vocational Technical Schools; Diane Ziegler, principal of the Academy for Health and Medical Sciences; and Teresa Morelli, supervisor of academics. Representing Raritan Valley Community College, the higher education partner, was Joanne Travaglini, coordinator for high school outreach, and Nancy Jorden, administrator.

There are career and technical education programs offered throughout New Jersey's 21 county vocational high schools and in more than 100 traditional high schools. More than 90,000 secondary students participate in CTE programs, with approximately 30,000 of them attending the 21 vocational schools. Approximately 70 percent of the state's vocational-tech students attend college. Every county features partnerships with business, industry, colleges and universities.

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