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Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno Visits Passaic County Technical Institute's Academy Of Finance To Promote Career And Technical Education School Partnerships

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On-Site Bank Branch Provides Students With Practical Application Coursework

Trenton, NJ – Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today visited the Passaic County Technical Institute's (PCTI) Academy of Finance, concluding her month-long tour highlighting successful partnerships between New Jersey's Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and business industry around the state. PCTI has a collaborative arrangement for its Academy of Finance program with Columbia Bank, whose branch office on campus allows PCTI students to receive hands on experience.

"The ultimate goal for CTE schools is to offer students the opportunity to gain insight and knowledge that will compliment their campus coursework, providing them with a competitive edge to succeed in their career of choice," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "This approach is a unique feature of PCTI's Academy of Finance program of study where students are exposed to an actual branch bank where they are able to get hands on experience. The Christie Administration is excited about the creative steps our CTE schools are taking to make sure our students are workforce ready."

PCTI is the largest Career and Technical High School in the state in a single campus setting. PCTI provides 3,200 students in grades 9-12 with a wide array of academic, career and technical experiences, as well as athletics and after-school activities.

Located on a 55-acre campus in Wayne, PCTI receives students from all municipalities in Passaic County. Over 350 faculty members deliver the curriculum of 200 courses, including advanced academics and career areas in three academies: Academies of Finance, Medical Arts, and Information Technology; and eleven "schools of" programs: Schools of Engineering Technology, Business, Communication Arts, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Education and Human Services, Applied Technology, Service Careers, Construction Technology, Automotive Technology, and Performing Arts.

The Academy of Finance began when PCTI first opened its on-campus bank in 2001 through a partnership with Hudson United Bank – the first of its kind in New Jersey. The program has flourished ever since, offering training, financial education, school-to-career programs and financial career opportunities to students in the Academy of Finance. Eight years ago, a new partnership emerged with Columbia Bank, a mutual savings bank that has 44 branch offices throughout New Jersey. One of the branches is a "living classroom" on the PCTI campus, where students can learn while working at the bank. The operation is supervised by Rafael Salce, a former Academy of Finance and PCTI graduate.

Other business partners include SaxBST, a public accounting firm located in Clifton, which has been a loyal business partner with PCTI since the inception of the Academy of Finance Program, and J.P. Morgan, represented by Alonso Tangarife, Vice President of Investments, who is also a PCTI graduate. Alonso has been a guest speaker for academy students, sharing invaluable information on possible career paths in the financial industry.

In addition, students in the Academy of Finance can earn college credits, as well as gain work experience. All

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Academy of Finance students have the opportunity to earn three college credits during the second semester of their junior year in an approved accounting course through Passaic County Community College and three college credits during the first semester of their senior year in an approved business organization & management course through Berkeley College.

Lt. Governor Guadagno was accompanied on her visit to Passaic County Technical Institute'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 the academy's partners to learn more about the program at the Academy of Finance.

"It is encouraging to visit high-functioning programs in our Career and Technical schools that are created through partnerships, such as the one at PCTI, to bridge what employers call the skills gap inhibiting students from securing employment immediately after graduation from high school and college," said Commissioner Wirths. "Programs such as this one offer students enough credentials in the field of finance that they can successfully move on to higher education or even compete for entry level positions in the job market."

School representatives who took part in the tour included Ms. Diana Lobosco, Superintendent; John Maiello, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Michael Parent, Principal; Sandra Woods, Assistant to Superintendent–Communications/Special Projects; Albert Alexander, Board President; Damaris Solomon, Board Vice President; Linda Murphy, School to Careers Coordinator; and Maria Matano and Thomas Woods, Academy of Finance instructors.

Representing the business partners were the following: for Columbia Bank, Thomas Kemly, President/CEO; Richard Graff, Senior Government Banking Officer; and Rafael Salce, PCTI Branch Manager; for the SaxBST Accounting Firm, Eddie Riviera, tax manager; and for J.P. Morgan, Alonso Tangarife, Vice President of Investments.

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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