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Lt. Governor Guadagno Praises New Jersey STEM Pathways Network for Helping Meet the Demand for Thousands of Highly-Skilled Workers

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Trenton, NJ - Continuing her celebration of STEM week after yesterday's kick-off of the Million Women Mentors program, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today praised Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks and the members of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network for their efforts to fill New Jersey's increasing need for thousands of skilled workers for jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

"New Jersey will have more than 248,000 STEM jobs by 2018 - an 11 percent increase from the number of STEM jobs in the State today," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "We are taking action now to proactively educate our children and our workforce to ensure that, when those STEM jobs of the future are available, New Jersey's best and brightest are ready to fill them."

Secretary Hendricks noted that there has been limited awareness and interaction between those engaged in the more than 200 STEM initiatives already underway in New Jersey. That is why, in August, she created the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network and brought together three dozen of the State's leaders in academia, industry and philanthropy to enhance collaboration and build bridges among agencies, foundations, higher education and businesses.

"By organizing our efforts and enhancing collaborations, something new and powerful can emerge," said Secretary Hendricks. "We can truly build a cohesive innovation ecosystem that will help students find meaningful careers, supply industry with highly-skilled workers and meet the economic needs of the State."

Laura Overdeck, chair of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network and of the Overdeck Family Foundation, said she is pleased that the State is expanding its efforts to provide STEM opportunities for students.

"For many years, I have supported the Governor's School in the Sciences at Drew University because I know how important it is to spark students' interests in STEM-related fields," said Ms. Overdeck. "I am excited about the STEM Pathways Network because it can spark the imagination of students at a time when they are deciding on their life's direction. We need to do more to encourage our young students - especially our young women - to get involved in STEM education."

In the past 10 years, growth in STEM jobs has been three times greater than in non-STEM jobs, with 80 percent of the fastest-growing occupations in the United States dependent upon STEM knowledge and skills. While women comprise 48 percent of the US workforce, just 24 percent of women are in STEM fields.

"STEM education is vital to the State's continuing prosperity," said Kim Case, Executive Director of the Research and Development Council of New Jersey and a Network member. "The Research and Development Council is proud of our State's legacy of innovation, and we welcome the support of higher education to build relationships between industry and academia."

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