LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY LAUNCHES 'WOW INITIATIVE' AT 8TH ANNUAL STEM SUMMIT

Initiative will promote science, technology, engineering and math education for career development

NEWTON – Tuesday, October 18, 2011 – Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today announced the launch of the “WOW Initiative”, a statewide public awareness campaign designed to engage, educate and “wow” Massachusetts students into realizing the opportunities in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers. The initiative was launched at the 8th Annual STEM Summit, which brings government, academic, business and community leaders together to focus on future initiatives to enhance STEM opportunities in the Commonwealth.

"In this global economy, it is critical that we expose students to new skills that will prepare them for success in STEM fields," said Governor Deval Patrick. "Thanks to Lieutenant Governor Murray's leadership, and the dedication of the many stakeholders involved in this annual summit, we are moving forward with a plan to engage more students in Massachusetts."

"Our Administration values the strong partnership with academic, business, and community leaders as we work together to empower and prepare more students to study STEM fields," said Lieutenant Governor Murray. "The benefits of encouraging more students to study STEM fields will have a catalytic effect on Massachusetts' future workforce, jobs and the economy. By raising greater awareness today through the ‘WOW Initiative’, we are developing a pipeline of talented future employees in a range of innovative careers in Massachusetts."

To kick-off the “WOW Initiative”, Lieutenant Governor Murray previewed the first in a series of videos that will be distributed to schools across the state aimed at encouraging students to pursue careers in STEM. Statistician Bill James from the Boston Red Sox; Nigel Jacobs, Mayor Menino’s Emerging Technology Advisor; Jim Toepel, a Video Game Designer from Harmonix Music Systems, and Amy Kukulya, Ocean Researcher from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, are among the 15 inaugural honorees featured in a series of messages about the many opportunities for students in STEM related fields.

“My passion for technology and engineering was inspired by the opportunities I had as a student to participate in STEM programs,” said Mikell Taylor, Systems Engineer at
Bluefin Robotics. “I'm really excited to be a part of the 'WOW Initiative' campaign and have a chance to pass that inspiration along to others.”

Lieutenant Governor Murray also used this year’s annual STEM Summit to announce that the city of Boston has formed a regional STEM network, joining six regional Pre-K-16 STEM networks across the state. The STEM Advisory Council has approved $40,000 in seed funding from the state’s STEM Pipeline Fund to support the development of this new network that will work with members of the private and non-profit sector as well as academia in the city.

“This is a wonderful initiative to bring together some of the most innovative minds in the country to show kids that they can literally change the world through the use of science and technology,” said Mayor Thomas Menino. “In Boston, we have transformed the way constituents communicate with municipal government through the Citizens Connect smart phone application and we continue to foster and encourage innovation through the Innovation District on the South Boston water front.”

Closing the achievement gap is one of Governor Patrick's second term priorities and the Administration continues to work on several different fronts to give educators the tools they need to help students reach academic success. Recognizing the Commonwealth’s position as a national leader in STEM fields, the Administration has developed a number of strategies to encourage students to pursue careers in these areas. These include the establishment of six STEM early college high schools; bolstering STEM Advanced Placement (AP) participation; training a specialized cadre of 250 STEM teachers; providing more technical assistance to districts wanting to improve STEM programs; and substantially enhancing professional and curriculum development opportunities throughout the state.

“Massachusetts is a world leader in STEM fields, and encouraging educational development in those areas is a top priority,” said Education Secretary Paul Reville. “We have jobs to grow, achievement gaps to close and the challenge of inspiring our students to embrace the STEM fields which are so rapidly becoming vital to our society and to our economy.”

“Massachusetts has set a national standard for STEM planning and education and the University of Massachusetts is proud to play a major role in this important effort,” said President Robert Caret of the University of Massachusetts. "Being among the Commonwealth's leaders at the 8th STEM Summit is a critical statement about the role that higher education plays in this continuum of learning that begins with Early Education throughout adulthood. As I toured the state last week, I continue to be impressed with the many ways in which our campuses are engaged in STEM education and outreach and also heard loud and clear the business community’s need for workers who will help to drive our state's technology and innovation economy.

During last year’s STEM Summit, Lieutenant Governor Murray released the state’s first STEM plan, tying economic development to educational enhancement in STEM fields. The plan set targeted goals and benchmarks to promote STEM education, jobs, and workforce development. Over the last year, since the release of the plan, the STEM
Advisory Council and its associated subcommittees have created the infrastructure necessary and are on track with the goals outlined in the year one timeline.

"The Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR) sees STEM as a critical investment in the Commonwealth's most important competitive advantage -- human and intellectual capital," said JD Chesloff, Executive Director of MBR and member of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council. "The Patrick-Murray Administration, legislative leaders, the business community and the STEM field understand that investing in STEM education is an economic imperative that strengthens the state's economic vitality and enables us to compete in the global economy now and for years to come. This summit celebrates and renews the Commonwealth's collective commitment to the state's STEM agenda which, under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Murray and the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, is serving as a national model. The members of MBR - CEOs and leading executives from some of the state's largest companies that employ more than 215,000 people in the state - are pleased to be part of this effort."

Please visit www.mass.gov/governor/STEM to learn more about the Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

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