CONNECT's mission: to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of higher education; and to advance the economic, educational and cultural life of Southeastern Massachusetts.
Southeastern Massachusetts Economic Development Summit, November 9, 2010

More than 150 leaders from business, industry, education, and the community gathered in Kingston, MA to discuss regional economic development. The program featured panels with leaders from area companies discussing industry needs in six sectors: Renewable Energy and Green Technology, Health Care and Life Sciences, Marine Science and Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Public Service, and Applied Computer Graphics/Technology.

Attendees were the first to receive the CONNECT Economic Impact Report 2010.

Highlights:

• Collectively, over 53,000 students were enrolled in the six CONNECT institutions in FY09.
• Last year, the six CONNECT colleges and universities awarded over 5,000 credit and non-credit courses and degree programs.
• Eighty-two percent of students came from Southeastern Massachusetts. A majority of alumni remain in Southeastern MA – 105,000 are known to live here.
• The six colleges and universities employ 9,400 faculty, staff, and students – making the partnership one of the top five employers in the region.
• The estimated regional economic impact of the CONNECT institutions is $670 million.

A copy of the report, videos of Summit speakers, and other resources are available at the CONNECT website: http://www.connectsemass.org/economicdevelopmentsummit.html

CONNECT will work in the coming year to address three of the Summit’s overarching recommendations:

1. Through the Southeast Regional PreK-16 STEM Network, to generate student enthusiasm and achievement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math;
2. To expand cross-regional collaborations and create more numerous and flexible higher education pathways;
3. To explore options for expanding the numbers of our students serving the area’s non-profits and businesses through internships and co-ops.

OUTSTANDING CONFERENCE LINKING EDUCATION, INDUSTRY, EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Leadership in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)

CONNECT administers the Southeast/Cape & Islands Regional PreK-16 STEM Network, with support from the Department of Higher Education STEM Pipeline Fund. In the last year, the Network focused on developing infrastructure: an Advisory Council was empaneled representing K-12, higher education, government, industry, workforce development, and community educational organizations. The Network’s new website launched, featuring a searchable directory of Southeastern MA/Cape and Islands STEM agencies and organizations. The first Spotlight on Southeast STEM E-newsletter was published February 23, 2011, and five more editions have been issued through June 2011 to a newsletter mailing list that has grown to over 500 recipients. Signing up for the newsletter can be done at the click of a button: http://www.connectsemass.org/STEM.

Pathways to College Readiness and College Success, April 13, 2011

Over 350 Southeastern Massachusetts educators attended the College Readiness Conference in Kingston, Massachusetts. High school and higher education faculty and administrators gathered to build a bridge between the region’s K-12 schools and colleges, focusing on a better aligned P-20 curriculum that will set more students on the path to post-secondary success. One of the primary motivations for the CONNECT CEOs in initiating the conference is the high proportion of incoming freshmen who require remedial work in English and mathematics: as much as 65 percent at the commonwealth’s community colleges.

The keynote speaker at the Readiness Conference was Mr. Allison Jones of Achieve, the national organization tasked with developing the new PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment that will eventually replace MCAS. Jones was followed by speakers from the Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education who described currently-unfolding changes in educational policy and standards. DHE Commissioner Richard Freeland discussed “The Vision Project,” Susan Wheltle, DESE’s Director of the Office of Literacy and Human capital, gave an overview of the new Common Core standards. Closing sessions brought the region’s K-12 and college and university faculty together for collegial conversations around curriculum alignment and “next steps” for continuing the conversation.

The conference was planned in partnership with the Southeastern Massachusetts Readiness Center, with sponsorship from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, The College Board, and ACT. Conference presentations and videos are available on the CONNECT website: www.connectsemass.org.

Summer of Science

For the second year, CONNECT coordinated and promoted summer STEM experiences for elementary, middle and high school students on its member campuses. “Summer of Science” is meant to inspire enthusiasm for invention and exploration and to encourage young people to pursue STEM education and careers. Massachusetts Community College joined the other CONNECT institutions with a new program this year titled “Bees, Babugans, and Bioengineering” focusing on agriculture and design challenges.

The other campuses offer their own unique programs, with Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Bridgewater State University’s Whale of a Mystery focusing on marine biology, the environment taking the spotlight at UMass Dartmouth, and Cape Cod Community College and BSU’s ACE Camp incorporating aerospace engineering. Students at Bristol’s Kids College enroll in a range of classes similar to those college students take, from game design and digital photography to robotics and computer programming.

The program was launched last July, 2010, at Massachusetts Maritime Academy, with more than 150 people at all ages enjoying free ice cream and hands-on activities such as steering an underwater ROV, creating sand sculptures, manufacturing slime, and walking inside a giant Earth balloon.