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NJ STEM Pathways Network Awards Grants to Four New Jersey STEM Ecosystems

Chatham, NJ– The New Jersey STEM Pathways Network (NJSPN) has awarded each of the four New Jersey STEM Ecosystems an advancement grant in support of their community STEM projects. The Delran STEM Ecosystem Alliance, Liberty STEM Ecosystem Alliance, Newark STEAM Coalition, and South Jersey STEM & Innovation Partnership received their grant awards at the NJSPN Quarterly Meeting this morning at Princeton University.

The NJSPN is a public-private strategic alliance that defines and guides a statewide STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) vision for pre-K-to-workforce formal and informal learning opportunities that strengthens academic skills and inspires students; facilitates research and recommendations on STEM talent pipeline needs and barriers to success; and exposes students to the many educational pathways, experiences, and professionals that can prepare them for STEM degree programs and careers in New Jersey.

The Delran STEM Ecosystem Alliance will utilize its advancement grant to host its four-week Delran Cubs STEAM Up Summer Camp from July 9 – August 2, 2018. The Summer Camp allows students to participate in engineering activities and design challenges based on real-world problems, in addition to providing experiences in robotics, circuitry, and coding. The camp's goal is to grow the established Delran STEM ecosystem by increasing the number of students that are interested in participating in STEM activities.

The Liberty STEM Alliance will utilize its advancement grant to host the inaugural Hudson County Hackathon that will span across three events in 2018, including two lead-up events and a final contest in June. The Hackathon is designed to be a problem-solving event that will challenge fifth through seventh grade students of all backgrounds to use coding and technology to solve a current problem facing Hudson County. This program will also provide an additional education program for parents and educators that will take place during the Hackathon events, where participants will learn how to support students as they grow their STEM knowledge.

The Newark STEAM Coalition (Coalition) will utilize its advancement grant to collaborate with Rutgers' Earth & Environmental Science & Engineering Summer Scholars Institute. This successful summer program is managed by Rutgers University-Newark, a Coalition partner, and is geared towards exposing Newark's middle and high school students to potential careers in applied earth and environmental sciences and engineering using innovative teaching and mentoring techniques. This grant will allow the Coalition to strengthen connections with Newark Public Schools by identifying middle and high school, year-round, and college program pathways that engage STEAM employers through innovative STEAM curriculum and experiential learning.

The Coalition will also use part of its advancement grant to support its asset mapping project. Asset mapping will allow the ecosystem to identify and centralize currently available STEAM resources and create a web-based platform that can be used as a tool by ecosystem partners to strengthen alignment and form strategic partnerships.

The South Jersey STEM & Innovation Partnership will utilize its advancement grant to host two IoT (Internet of Things) Hackathons based on the Cisco Hackathon Playbook framework, with one Hackathon being held at Camden County College in spring of 2018 and another at Salem Community College in summer of 2018. The Hackathons will bring together teams of high school students, supported by college students and industry mentors, to develop technological innovative solutions to real-life challenges of their choosing. The one-day Hackathon events will push the envelope in creative thinking, problem solving, entrepreneurial pitching of their solutions, and hands-on learning opportunities. In addition, the Hackathons will provide a platform for students to compete, expand learning in STEM education and develop skills in computer science, computing and information technology, and engineering.

“We are proud to contribute to the already thriving New Jersey STEM ecosystems, and look forward to seeing how these grants continue to improve student outcomes in STEM education,” said Laura Overdeck, Chair of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, Founder and President of Bedtime Math and Chair of the Overdeck Family Foundation. The support for the NJSPN advancement grants has been generously provided by the Overdeck Family Foundation.

The four New Jersey ecosystems are part of a national community of practice of 56 STEM learning ecosystems selected by the STEM Funders Network. The New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, an initiative created by Secretary of Higher Education, Rochelle Hendricks, chaired by philanthropist Laura Overdeck, and now managed by the Research & Development Council of New Jersey, spearheaded the creation of these STEM learning ecosystems in New Jersey in the last two years.

You can learn more about the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network and the four New Jersey STEM learning ecosystems by visiting www.njstempathways.org.