

Media Release

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\$139,000 Microsoft grant awarded to Quinsigamond Community College
Worcester Public Schools to Benefit from QCC's Advanced Robotics Intensive

WORCESTER, Mass. – Microsoft Corporation's U.S. Partners in Learning Massachusetts Education Innovation Grant program has awarded \$139,000 to Quinsigamond Community College in support of the college's new *Advanced Robotics Intensive* for underserved Worcester Public School students. Quinsigamond is one of only 4 organizations in the state to receive this prestigious grant out of an original applicant pool of 78. Up to 300 students in grades 6 through 12 from Worcester middle and high schools will benefit directly throughout the 2007-2008 year.

Microsoft's Massachusetts Education Innovation Grant program is designed to support and extend after-school programs that focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). For nearly five years, QCC has offered Worcester Public School students a *Women in Technology* program and *Summer Technology Academy*, both of which have included a Robotics component. Betty Lauer, Associate Professor of Computer Systems Engineering and Coordinator of Computer Systems Engineering Technology, designed these programs, and will implement the new *Advanced Robotics Intensive*.

Most students who take part in QCC's technology outreach programs come from economically underserved families, and typically lack both a computer and a professional mentor at home. Many struggle to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test and need improvement in science, math and English. Lauer knows first-hand the importance of hands-on learning opportunities in STEM disciplines for these students.

According to Lauer, "...we want our technology outreach 'graduates' to return as part of Worcester's labor force and help break the cycle of poverty and lack of access to these fields that confront their communities."

Albert Vasquez, Director of Special Projects for the Worcester Public Schools added that QCC's programs "...do something the Worcester Public School system simply does not have the resources or capacity to do itself."

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