

Educate Texas gives \$750K for STEM degree accelerator

College to lead regional consortium focused on preparing students for petrochemical sector

BAYTOWN — Lee College has been awarded a \$750,000 grant from Educate Texas to lead a regional consortium that aims to increase the number of underrepresented students earning science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) credentials and entering the petrochemical workforce.

Lee College is one of only five institutions of higher education in Texas selected to receive grant funds for the Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator initiative. Each recipient convened a regional consortium that includes two-year colleges, four-year colleges, K-12 partners and workforce partners.

Consortium members have examined regional workforce data, identified the STEM pathways in which they plan to work and begun engaging faculty and workforce partners to achieve two goals: redesigning gateway courses in STEM majors to ensure alignment with workforce needs in the petrochemical industry, and providing professional development for faculty to improve teaching and learning in STEM fields.

“Lee College is privileged to serve as the Gulf Coast lead for the Texas STEM Accelerator Grant,” said Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown, noting the importance of coordinated efforts to close the middle-skills gap in the region. “We have to strengthen the education to workforce pipeline through collaboration, but more importantly, through innovation. By bringing all partners — secondary and post-secondary educators, business and industry, workforce boards and others — we are more likely to build strong models that are replicable, scalable and sustainable.”

The STEM Accelerator project is developed in accordance with priorities for education and workforce outlined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission. The grant is funded through the Helmsley Charitable Trust, Greater Texas Foundation, Council for Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREEED,) JPMorgan Chase and the W.W. Caruth, Jr., Foundation. It is the first time the Helmsley Trust has ever funded a project outside New York State.

“The Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator motivates our education and workforce partners to collaborate at a regional level to develop and refine STEM pathways,” said John Fitzpatrick, executive director of Educate Texas. “These pathways will result in an increased number of students across the state earning STEM degrees that meet regionally-identified workforce needs. We are proud to be working with a strong public-private coalition of national and state foundations, corporations, local business groups and the state of Texas on this pioneering initiative.”