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Construction starts at MCC on building for Great Path

By:Journal Inquirer Staff

MANCHESTER - Officials today held a ceremony to mark the start of construction on a \$32 million building for Great Path Academy, an alternative high school on the campus of Manchester Community College.

The school has operated out of classrooms in MCC's Lowe Building since it opened in 2002-03 with the goal of helping disengaged students who might otherwise drop out of high school.

Construction is expected to be completed in January 2009.

When the building is done, the school will serve approximately 325 students in grades 10, 11, and 12 from Bolton, Coventry, East Hartford, Ellington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Manchester, and Tolland.

The new building will be a 75,000-square-foot, two-story facility, which will resemble the other modern-looking structures on the MCC campus. It will include flexible learning spaces and advanced technology; an Internet café; a gymnasium; and a community room.

The school will be adjacent to the Lowe Building, and Great Path students will still be part of the MCC community, according to MCC's president, Jonathan M. Daube.

Great Path Academy was conceived by Manchester school officials in response to a high dropout rate at Manchester High School.

The school follows the middle college model, in which students work simultaneously on high school diplomas and post-secondary degrees or certificates.

Its target audience is students who don't function well in a traditional high school atmosphere but who can handle the responsibility and increased freedom of being on a college campus.

In June, the school graduated 52 students - all of them with plans for continuing their education.

Today's ceremony included Department of Public Works Commissioner Raeanne V. Curtis, Daube, and Great Path Academy Principal Thomas M. Danehy.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, in a statement, called the project an innovative and exciting opportunity for area students.

"The new Great Path Academy will open many doors for our students who may not otherwise attempt to go to college. By creating this new and challenging educational environment, we are benefiting the entire state as we enhance the quality and competitive skills of our future workforce," Rell said.

Curtis said the project "represents a unique collaboration of agencies all working together to provide our students with state-of-the-art facilities as they climb the ladder from high school to college.

"This is a very gratifying project for our department to administer, from the planning stage, to design, and through construction. I look forward to a successful completion, on time and on budget."

Daube called the groundbreaking "one of the most exciting days in the college's history."

The architect for the project is Tai Soo Kim Partners of Hartford, the contractor is Banton Construction Co. of North Haven, and the construction administrator is Gar-San Corp. of Watertown.

Great Path has its own governing board and is an interdistrict magnet high school managed, on behalf of the community colleges' Board of Trustees, by the Capitol Region Education Council.

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