FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Colleges, University System Commit to More NH STEM Graduates

May 15, 2012 – Concord, NH – Top officials from New Hampshire’s two public systems of higher education are committing to increase the number of graduates with degrees and certificates in science, technology, engineering and math (so-called STEM fields). Representatives from the University System of New Hampshire (USNH) and the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) signed a letter of commitment today that sets out steps they will take together to meet the goal of increasing by 50% the number of STEM educated graduates by 2020 and doubling that number by 2025. Specific steps will include:

- Creation of new transfer pathways for students in STEM fields
- Collaboration on program development and delivery
- Promotion of STEM career opportunities
- Sharing of facilities, equipment, technology, and staff and faculty expertise
- Identification of resources to support STEM field education
- A commitment to expand access to education and opportunities in STEM fields for all state residents, across all regions of the state and all socio-economic groups
- Other initiatives in partnership with NH employers

Currently the two systems graduate approximately 1,120 students in the STEM fields, encompassing Computer Technologies, Advanced Machine Tool Technology, Mechatronics, Automation and Robotics, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Mechanical Design Technology, Numerical Control Programming, Electrical Engineering, Biotechnology, Precision Welding, Energy Services Technology, and Aviation Technology at the certificate and associate degree level, and degrees at the bachelors, masters and doctoral level fields that include Engineering, Computer & Information Sciences, Biological & Biomedical Sciences, Math & Statistics, and the Physical Sciences, with a variety of sub-disciplines.

While New Hampshire consistently ranks among the top 10 states in the percentages of adults with associates, bachelors and graduate degrees, the state is not as well-positioned in the percentages of post-secondary degree holders in science and engineering. Recent trends indicate the historical reliance on in-migration of highly educated workers cannot be sustained.

“I applaud the Community College System and the University System for partnering to respond to the needs of New Hampshire’s economy, and for creating opportunities for residents of our state to access high-quality jobs here in New Hampshire,” said Gov. Lynch. “Our economic future depends on our ability to innovate, and to turn innovative ideas into commercial enterprises that create jobs. The vitality of our New Hampshire businesses depends on their ability to find highly-skilled employees. The commitment by our public institutions of higher education to increase the number of STEM graduates, and to ensure that those opportunities are available in all regions of the state to people of all educational and socio-economic backgrounds, is exactly the kind of vision and leadership that will keep New Hampshire a strong and economically thriving state.”
Many hiring officials in New Hampshire say a greater number of people with STEM-related credentials and skills are needed in the workforce and job applicant pool. Businesses in advanced manufacturing and other industries have job openings available for engineers, scientists and skilled technicians but, an appropriately skilled supply of workers is not readily available. The immediate gap is being addressed by some innovative collaborative efforts between community college and university system institutions and individual businesses, but there is a strong need to scale up these efforts and to address the long-term pipeline of skilled engineers, scientists and technicians available across a range of industries.

“A state cannot compete effectively in a global technology-based economy, retain its high income ranking or significantly advance economic opportunity for residents without adequate numbers of people who are educated and trained to operate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” said USNH Chancellor Ed Mackay. “The commitment being made today represents a joining of efforts by the two public systems of postsecondary education in New Hampshire to provide unprecedented links and opportunities for students to enter and progress in the STEM fields.”

Ross Gittell, Chancellor of the Community College System, said “This initiative will include working closely with employers to promote the opportunities for students in STEM field programs. Not only are there jobs available now for individuals with strong STEM preparation, but many of the careers of the future will involve cutting-edge processes and technology. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to ensure that New Hampshire retains its economic edge in the knowledge economy and that New Hampshire residents have access to opportunities for economic advancement.”

USNH Chancellor Ed MacKay and CCSNH Chancellor Ross Gittell sign the MOU to increase STEM graduates in front of Governor Lynch and all of the presidents at the 11 public colleges and universities in New Hampshire.

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About CCSNH
The Community College System of NH consists of seven colleges, offering associate degree and certificate programs, professional training, and transfer pathways to four-year degrees. The System's colleges are Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth; Lakes Region Community College in Laconia; Manchester Community College; Nashua Community College; NHTI – Concord’s Community College; River Valley Community College in Claremont and Keene; and White Mountains Community College in Berlin.