

Media Alert

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QCC Hosts Hands-on, Engineering Workshops For High Schoolers

WORCESTER – Area high school students interested in science and engineering will have an opportunity to drive and operate robots and learn about microscopic motion detectors as part of a series of hands-on workshops being hosted by Quinsigamond Community College on June 12 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. as part of the PowerUp! initiative.

The workshops, which will be attended by approximately 40 students from Doherty Memorial and Burncoat Senior high schools in Worcester, Worcester Vocational Technical High School and Tantasqua Regional High School in Sturbridge, are designed to encourage high school students to pursue engineering in college and as a career option.

“Many high school students don’t know the full range of careers that engineering encompasses,” says Betty Lauer, assistant professor of computer systems engineering. “There isn’t just one type of engineering, there are 20. By introducing them to robotics and microelectronics, we’re acquainting them with different facets of engineering.”

Ms. Lauer says attracting students to the field of engineering is becoming increasingly critical. “There’s a shortage of engineers in the workplace. By doing outreach to the local high schools, hopefully we’ll open some eyes to the different

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applications and opportunities that engineering provides,” says Lauer.

The robotics workshop will be presented by Steve Cremer, a retired Harvard University and MIT professor and current senior mentor for First Lego League International. An international program for children, First Lego, promotes math, science and technology learning through interactive robotics competitions.

Besides allowing students to operate robots during the workshop, Mr. Cremer will also talk about the different applications of robotics technology in the workplace and society.

The College is also hosting a workshop on the future of motion detection presented by Harold Russell and Warren Hardy of ST Microelectronics, a company which makes microchips. James Heffernan, professor of electromechanical technology and coordinator of the electromechanical program says students will learn how sophisticated, microscopic motion detectors are developed and used – including their role in operating unmanned aircraft.

“What we’re hoping to show students is that engineering is the application of math and physics,” says Heffernan. “We want them to know that if these are the kinds of jobs they’re interested in, then they should be studying math and physics now.”

Additionally, Northeastern University Assistant Professor Ron Sandler will be presenting a workshop on the societal and ethical impacts of technology.

Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, Power-Up! is a collaboration between the Museum of Science in Boston, Quinsigamond, Bunker Hill and

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Northern Essex community colleges, industry partners Keyspan Energy, Northern Power, and The Engineering Center, school districts and the Department of Education Tech Prep Network. The goal of the PowerUp! initiative is to get students excited and informed about science and engineering.

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