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FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SCHOOL TO OPEN HERE

Partners sign papers to help launch bioscience academy in former South High School Building

Monday, October 1, 2012



SPRINGFIELD — An agreement signed Monday will create the state's first academy to train local students for high-paying jobs in an in-demand field.

The bioscience academy, which will be in the former South High School, will prepare more students for food, fuel and fiber-related careers, which supporters said have high growth but insufficient student turnout.

The nonprofit Global Impact STEM Academy is expected to open next school year. It will be one of only five such schools in the country, officials said.

About 200 residents and community leaders turned out to watch representatives from partners Springfield City Schools, Clark State Community College, Wright State University and the Dayton Development Coalition — serving as the regional representative for JobsOhio — sign the articles incorporating the 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Sen. Chris Widener, R-Springfield, said the average salary for a bioscience professional is \$68,000.

“I’m very pleased to declare tonight the beginning for the next step in STEM education used for job creation and workforce development right here in Springfield, Ohio,” Widener said. “Agriculture, as you know, provides one in seven jobs in this state.”

Start-up and renovation costs to put the academy in 70,000 square feet of the historic former South High will be about \$10.5 million, most of which has already been raised through public and private funding.

A required local match to renovate the building is less than a half-million short of the \$1.5 million needed, said Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce President Mike McDorman. He’s confident the funds will be raised by the end of the year.

“We’re working toward the final push to complete that campaign, hopefully by the end of the year,” McDorman said. “I think we’ll achieve the \$1.5 million with no problem.”

Half of the estimated \$9 million renovation of South High School will be paid for by the Ohio School Facilities Commission and half from the local match and state funding sources. The building will be leased from Springfield City Schools for \$1 each year.

Ohio State University and Battelle Memorial Institute will join the lead partners to raise the \$3

million still needed for the renovation match. Those two institutions also pledged \$350,000 in start-up funding. It's expected the state education system will fund most of the \$1 million needed in the second year, based on the number of students, Widener said.

"We found these kinds of schools really do produce results for all level students," Widener said.

No details on the academy's staffing were available Monday. That will be determined by the curriculum yet to be finalized by the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio and the Clark County Educational Service Center, Springfield district spokeswoman Kim Fish said. In June, Widener estimated Global Impact would bring 50 to 60 jobs to the community. Ohio State University will assist in developing the curriculum, saving the project more money, Widener said.

Founders want to work directly with businesses on internships for students, who also would be involved in project-based, hands-on learning. The Springfield City Board of Education voted last week to appoint Board President Ed Leventhal and member Wanda Truss to the academy's inaugural board of directors. Dayton Development Coalition appointed Jeff Hoagland, its president and CEO.

Neither Clark State or Wright State had appointed its board members by Monday night, though representatives were on hand to sign the documents.

The 13-member board will consist of the president or designee each from Clark State Community College and Wright State University, and the superintendent or designee from Springfield City School District, according to the articles of incorporation.

Each institution will also have two sitting board

members and an employer/business executive appointed by their respective organizations. The Dayton Development Coalition will have one board member.

Widener championed the idea for the school and worked to push it through all year. He said the concept came after he attended a Clark County Farm Bureau meeting where he heard about the need for more agriculture and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

A.B. Graham started the first nation's 4-H club in Springfield on Jan. 15, 1902.

"But more importantly, A.B. Graham had just a little bigger vision," Widener said. "Listen to his own words: 'Elevate the standard of living in Ohio, emphasize the importance of hard work and habits of industry with our young people, acquaint the youth with their environment and scientific investigations, and inspire youth to further education in science.' Ladies and gentlemen, that's exactly what we're doing."

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