



Science Technology Engineering Math
Education

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**Science Foundation Arizona's STEM Education Center and Cochise College
Announce *Running Start*, the first Mechanical and
Electronics Engineering-based Workforce Academy**

***First-of-Its-Kind Program to Prepare Arizona Middle and High School Students
for Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)***

SIERRA VISTA, Ariz. – April 9, 2009 – Arizona STEM Education Center at Science Foundation Arizona (STEMAz) announces its collaboration with Cochise College to create the Cochise College *Running Start Academy*, a mechanical and electronics engineering based career academy in rural southwest Arizona – the first of its kind in the western United States.

Science Foundation Arizona grant of \$500,000 supports the effort of Cochise College to partner with local schools to establish a middle and high school STEM pathway to higher education through the *Running Start Academy*. As a pilot program with potential for statewide expansion, specially trained instructors provide technical education and skills training to students preparing them for undergraduate studies in applied engineering and science leading to an internationally recognized *Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification*.

“The goal of *Running Start* is to support a pipeline of high school graduates who have the necessary skills to attract and grow high-paying, technology based jobs in Arizona,” said William C. Harris, president and CEO of Science Foundation Arizona. “Cochise College and *Running Start* will engage Arizona’s youth in STEM education and prepare them to meet and exceed local and global industry needs.”

(more)

“*Running Start Academy* is an integral component of the STEM pipeline that will allow us to impact 150 middle and high school students in Cochise County each year,” said Karen Nicodemus, president of Cochise College. “These high school graduates will be among Arizona’s most prepared for college and future work in engineering fields with internationally recognized certification.”

“Skilled employees are the most important ingredient to Fort Huachuca’s strategic operations,” said Melissa A. Sturgeon - Colonel, US Army and Commander, US Army Garrison. “*Running Start* will allow us to tap into a talent base much earlier with possibilities for engaging students in hands-on learning opportunities that complement their knowledge base creating a win-win for everyone.”

Highly motivated high school juniors and seniors participating in *Running Start* can graduate from high school with up to 40 of the 64 college credits required for an associate degree.

“At STEMAz, we are ensuring students have opportunities to prepare themselves for highly skilled, well-paid employment in the 21st century,” said Darcy Renfro, executive director of STEMAz. “An engineering-based career academy will prepare students for high paying careers, while simultaneously jumpstarting their college education.”

The mechanical and electronics engineering-based academy is slated to be offered at the Sierra Vista Campus beginning spring 2010.

About Science Foundation Arizona and STEMAz

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501©(3) nonprofit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty. Its goal is to build and strengthen scientific, engineering and biomedicine in areas of greatest strategic value to Arizona’s competitiveness in the global economy. SFAz is investing in partnerships between nonprofit research institutions and industry and in the education pipeline to attract and support a knowledge-driven economy.

STEMAz With the backing of private industry and community partnership support, Science Foundation Arizona launched STEMAz in October 2008 to enhance Arizona’s capacity and achievement in STEM education for all students. A first-rate education system must be grounded in science and mathematics to reinforce the logic and critical thinking required in a competitive, global marketplace. STEMAz’s mission is to expand and support Arizona’s efforts to build the education infrastructure to support an innovation economy.

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