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MEMORANDUM

TO: House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means
Joint Committee on Higher Education
Joint Committee on Education

FROM: Noe Ortega, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education

CC: Clantha McCurdy, Deputy Commissioner, David Cedrone, Associate
Commissioner Workforce Development Allison Little, Assistant
Commissioner

DATE: November 26

SUBJECT: STEM Starter Academy – Program Evaluation Report, Year 8

The STEM Starter Academy (SSA) program is an initiative of the Department of Higher Education (DHE), funded through Line Item 7066-0036 of Massachusetts FY23 Budget.

The goal of SSA is to recruit, ready, retain, and graduate Massachusetts community college students and prepare them to earn STEM degrees and certificates, go on to 4-year STEM programs or enter the STEM workforce. Now in its 10th year of implementation, SSA has consistently demonstrated positive outcomes for more than 31,000 students across the Commonwealth's 15 public community colleges.

Students participating in SSA reflect the diversity of Massachusetts' community colleges:

- 51% students of color
- 54% women
- 35% age 25+
- 56% part time

Student success outcomes include:

- 9,500 degrees or certificates earned
- 2,700 students transferred to 4-year institutions
- 1,000 students case managed (best practice implemented in 2019) that has increased positive outcomes an additional 7%

SSA students earn STEM degrees or certificates at rates greater than their peers:

- Black SSA students – 3.2x greater than non SSA participants
- Latinx SSA students – 2.4x greater than non SSA participants
- Women SSA students – 2.1x greater than non SSA participants

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This long-standing initiative is meeting the challenge of achieving equity in STEM education and preparing students for careers in Massachusetts' rapidly-growing STEM economy.

The SSA program includes an independent evaluation, conducted annually, which provides a comprehensive report featuring rigorous data analysis to quantify student outcomes and demonstrate overall program impact. The complete *STEM Starter Academy Annual Evaluation Report, Year 8*, produced by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, is attached for your review.

The DHE is pleased to note the following Evaluation Report conclusion:

“SSA participants have achieved positive outcomes and earned STEM degrees and certificates at statistically significant higher rates than similar non-participating peers. This is true for various student groups as well, including Black, Latinx, and women participants. SSA is supporting growth in the number of STEM degree and certificate holders in Massachusetts at a time when STEM industry employs 21% of the Massachusetts workforce, and the projected growth rate for STEM jobs is more than double the projected rate for job growth overall.”

On behalf of the students served by SSA, the DHE is pleased to submit this report for consideration.

Attached:
STEM Starter Academy Annual Evaluation Report, Year 8
STEM Starter Academy Year 8 Report, Appendices