

Students at the Laurel College Center may have two new choices for bachelor's degrees by next fall as the number of colleges involved in the center jumps to five, a Howard Community College official said.

Ron Roberson, the college's vice president for academic affairs, said the College of Notre Dame is almost sure to offer courses toward a bachelor's degree in business administration.

The University of Maryland University College is also considering offering courses leading to a bachelor's in business information systems, he said.

The College Center, located on three floors of the Laurel Executive Building on Marshall Avenue, was launched in 2001 by Howard and Prince George's community colleges.

Those two colleges offer 80 to 100 credit courses each semester toward a two-year associate's degree.

Last fall, Towson University began offering the center's first four-year degree program in elementary education and special education.

Roberson discussed the center's continuing expansion Monday during a visit by Congressman Steny Hoyer, who had helped the center win a \$198,400 grant to build a science laboratory. The lab will be particularly useful in training nurses, Roberson had said in February.

"The need of our society is extremely great for the talent that is going to be educated in this facility," Hoyer said during his tour.

Dr. Ronald Williams, president of Prince George's Community College, and Dr. Mary Ellen Duncan, president of Howard Community College, were both on hand to thank Hoyer.

"We've grown this campus from zero to, maybe, 2,000 (students) in the past four years," Williams noted of its success.

Duncan added, "It's been great to come here and make things work for students."

She singled out student Steve Backus as a success story. The Laurel resident began working just out of high school and kept putting off college.

After the center opened, "when I realized how many credit courses I could get a few miles from my house, it kicked me in the right direction," he said. Backus is now working on an associate's degree in theater.