

LAUREL, MD - Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) today joined the Presidents of Prince George's Community College (PGCC) and Howard Community College (HCC) to announce the award of almost \$200,000 for the Laurel College Center that he secured in the federal Omnibus Appropriations Act passed by the Congress late last year.

The Laurel College Center (LCC) is an innovative partnership between Prince George's Community College and Howard Community College to make higher education more accessible to the residents of Laurel and the surrounding area. The LCC, offering credit and continuing education classes, has seen rapid enrollment growth, including a 35% increase in fall 2004. These funds will be used to expand the Laurel College Center including the development and outfitting of a biological sciences lab, which will be used to support nursing and allied health students.

"The success of Laurel College Center is a result of the commitment of both Prince George's Community College and Howard Community College to address an important unfulfilled need in the Northern Prince George's County/Laurel community," said Congressman Hoyer. "Through this unique partnership, since 2001, Laurel College Center has been able to serve the educational needs of the students in this region, and to help produce a better trained workforce for the neighboring business community."

"Maryland's public institutions rely on partnerships with state and local leaders to ensure our continued success," said PGCC President Ronald Williams. "Congressman Hoyer's work to secure funding for the Laurel College Center is an example of how we can work together to leverage resources that increase access to higher education and address workforce shortages."

"The skyrocketing enrollment shows that the Laurel College Center is meeting a definite need in the area. We are deeply grateful to Congressman Hoyer for providing the resources to expand our services," said HCC President Mary Ellen Duncan. "Not only will Laurel residents benefit, but Mr. Hoyer's support will help address critical workforce shortages in nursing and other careers that will provide better healthcare for us all."

"We all know that, especially as our population ages and our healthcare needs increase, our nation is facing a serious workforce shortage in nurses and healthcare workers," added Hoyer. "And yet, as we have worked hard to attract more students into these important professions, through efforts such as the Nurse Reinvestment Act of 2002, a critical component of the

equation is often missing.

“Many people often forget that training nurses and healthcare workers require significant time working in laboratories and in small, hands-on practice settings. But unfortunately, nationwide we suffer from a shortage of laboratory classroom space, and a shortage of trained faculty. Thus, we must also focus on the means to increase student capacity in nursing and healthcare training programs.

“I am pleased that through this earmark of almost \$200,000, Laurel College Center will be able to expand and renovate their laboratory classroom space, and better serve and expand the needs of their students entering the nursing and healthcare professions,” Hoyer concluded.

The Laurel College Center (LCC) has served over 6,200 students since its inception in 2001. However, combined PGCC and HCC have well over 100 students on the waiting list to enroll in their nursing programs. These are students who are qualified to enroll but cannot, in part, because the lab facilities are of insufficient size and scope.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, it is estimated that by 2020, there will be at least 400,000 fewer nurses to provide care than will be needed. Furthermore, the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s Center for Health and Workforce Development predicts that Maryland’s unfilled need for nurses will continue to hover around 17,000 through the year 2012

Being able to enroll these students will help address a critical workforce shortage for Maryland and the nation. Beginning in the fall, the new biology lab will be used to teach Biology and Anatomy and Physiology courses. These labs will serve students in the following programs: nursing, cardiovascular technology, paramedic/emergency medical technician, as well as other programs that require health lab work.

###