Grads urged to seek STEM scholarships

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RONDOULT VALLEY — Calling all college-bound whiz kids who've been accepted to a SUNY or CUNY for this fall, the state officially launched its $8 million Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Incentive Program Tuesday.

Graduating seniors are eligible for a full-tuition scholarship - if they major in one of those four areas of study and are willing to remain in-state at a STEM job for five years following graduation.

There's no time to waste, since the application deadline is Aug. 14. Applications and details about the program are available online on the state's newly launched website, HESC.ny.gov.

"By helping New York's best and brightest students launch their careers in-state and in STEM fields, we are laying the foundation for a truly world-class workforce," said Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

"Across New York, STEM careers are growing 2.5 times faster than those in any other field, and the Governor's incentive program is a valuable opportunity for the next generation to fill the gap," said SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher. "The program gives top-of-their-class students a world-class education in high-need fields while creating a pipeline of elite talent for the state where our workforce and economy need it the most. At SUNY, we are looking forward to getting this innovative program up and running."

At Rondout Valley, where they're branching out of STEM by "honning in agriculture and food science studies," superintendent Rosario Agostaro said. He called the program a good opportunity for some students.

"This is probably the most challenging time for our parents to meet tuition needs and this certainly is another opportunity for financial support, but students need to scrutinize the requirements," said Agostaro.

The program also requires that applicants be among the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. Only about 2,000 out of the nearly 200,000 high school grads will get any money from the program.

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