Erie Community College and Niagara County Community College are two of the 37 colleges and universities to receive monetary awards Tuesday through the State University of New York’s High Needs Program.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the nearly $7 million in awards to support workforce development in fields that are projected to substantially grow across the state. This year’s awards focus on the fields of engineering, renewable clean energy, health care, public health, biomedical-biotechnical, information technology and business and finance.

"By focusing on developing a workforce in these particular fields, we are positioning the economy for significant growth and helping people thrive in vibrant evolving industries across the state," Cuomo said in a press release. "The job training programs we are funding today provide students with the skills they need to succeed in some of the most rapidly expanding parts of the private sector."

NCCC received $162,630 as a part of the continuation of a biomed-biotech program. ECC received $50,681 as part of the continuation of an electrical engineering technology program and $40,452 as part of the continuation of an HVAC program, as well as $100,483 toward the development of a new nanotechnology degree program.

SUNY campuses will use the awards to create and sustain workforce development programs in high-needs fields, which are determined by the state Department of Labor and Empire State Development and take into account New York’s needs by region. Occupations are considered high need if they are projected to have a large number of total openings, a high growth rate or a combination of both in the coming years.

"SUNY’s High Needs Program is just one way in which we honor our promises of economic and workforce development to New York state while educating and training our students in careers that will lead to their success after graduation," said SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher.

Based on Department of Labor data, over the next 10 years, New York will need about 2,340 engineers and engineering technologists; 18,550 new health care practitioners and health technicians; 9,000 business and finance professionals and 6,500 community and social service professionals. The top five occupations that have been identified as high need in renewable clean energy include civil engineers, environmental engineers, mechanical engineers, and heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics and installers. There is also a growing need in New York, similar to a nationwide trend, for biological technicians, chemical technicians and medical and clinical laboratory technicians, as well as experts in information technology who specialize in cloud computing, smartphones, tablets and easily accessible software applications.
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