

Fauquier Times

PATH Foundation gifts \$1 million towards new science, tech and health building at Lord Fairfax



The PATH Foundation and LFCC signed a memorandum of understanding for the \$1 million gift Thursday. Left to right: Christy Connolly, John McCarthy, Cheryl Thompson-Stacy and Chris Coutts. Photo by Alisa Booze Troetschel.

Thursday, Feb. 11 | By [Michael Melkonian](#)

The PATH Foundation, formerly the Fauquier Health Foundation, is giving \$1 million to Lord Fairfax Community College for a new science, technology and health academic building.

To an extended applause in The Barn on LFCC's Warrenton campus Thursday, college president Cheryl Thompson-Stacy and PATH Foundation chairman John McCarthy signed a "memorandum of understanding" for the donation.

"Students will have access to career training previously unavailable in our community," McCarthy said. "These programs will strengthen our local workforce, including the healthcare workforce, which in turn will lead to a stronger and healthier community."

McCarthy said his group believes the PATH Foundation's four areas of concentration -- access to care, childhood wellness, mental health and senior services -- will benefit greatly from this investment.

The new 40,000-square-foot STEM-H building will feature clinical simulation labs, multi-purpose event spaces, expanded distance learning and flexible-purpose classrooms.

"We're running out of space," said Chris Coutts, provost of the LFCC's Fauquier campuses, about the need to expand.

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Students need hands-on experience for technical, workforce-ready programs, such as engineering and health fields. LFCC needed to create a space that allows the college to build programs for the way students actually learn, not just four square walls and a desk, Coutts said.

“We’re at the point where we need to do programs that are more directly tied to the workforce, that are more innovative and that are more hands on and practical,” Coutts said.

The PATH Foundation serves Fauquier, Rappahannock and northern Culpeper counties with a mission to enhance the health and vitality of the community, Christy Connolly, president and CEO of the PATH foundation, said. Education and workforce training is one of the best ways to reach this goal.

“I think there is a lot of opportunity to enhance our mission and our vision by making this contribution,” Connolly said. “And when you think about what community assets are in the area, this is clearly one of the strongest and one of the greatest opportunities.”

LFCC President Cheryl Thompson-Stacy said the progress towards the new academic building has moved along quickly for such a large project, mostly thanks to large, local donations and strong community support.

“It seems like everything's falling into place,” Thompson-Stacy said.

An earlier \$1 million donation from the William Hazel Family Foundation in October 2013 launched the campaign for the new science and health academic building.

Later in 2013, the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors appropriated \$150,000 for the project. In 2014, the Virginia General Assembly added the building to a list of projects in detailed planning phase and preliminary designs and approvals began.

Last December, Gov. Terry McAuliffe presented a \$2.5 billion bond package, which would include about \$17 million of state construction funding for LFCC’s STEM-H building if passed by the general assembly.

“There are 23 community colleges in the state of Virginia and we all think we need new buildings and other facilities,” Thompson-Stacy said. “So to have that local support really puts you ahead of the game.”

But Thompson-Stacy said the college is still responsible for covering the costs of “site work,” which includes any construction not part of the building itself -- such as grading, excavation, landscaping or paving.

After the \$1 million from PATH Foundation and existing fundraising, the LFCC foundation still needs to raise about \$500,000 this spring.