SCF growth serving students, business well BRADENTON HERALD EDITORIAL | School’s workforce strategy a big plus to region

State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota is continuing an impressive string of accomplishments this summer in the school’s rapid transformation into a powerful workforce training institution.

In June, the Florida State Board of Education approved SCF’s proposal to add a bachelor of applied science degree in energy technology management next year. This comes on the heels of the college’s initial baccalaureate program, in nursing, which debuted earlier this year, and additional offerings are in the works.

This month, a state-of-the-art, $11.2 million Medical Technology & Simulation Center opened at SCF’s Lakewood Ranch campus. The college’s first certified green building will serve students studying nursing and other health professions as well as education and energy technology. Classes began this week.

The college is pursuing an associate degree program in biotechnology in order to develop a home-grown workforce for local biotech companies such as a pharmaceutical startup called Lakewood Amedex, which expects to create 400 to 500 jobs over the next decade. The college is writing a curriculum that will train students to take those new positions as well as other jobs.

Earlier this year, the Manatee County school board approved SCF’s proposal to operate the first collegiate charter school in the nation, starting with sixth and seventh grade this year and expanding into high school in the future. Students will be able to gain both a high school diploma and a two-year associate in arts degree — tuition free.

This golden opportunity became significantly better last week with the announcement that Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers will provide scholarships to all graduates of the collegiate charter school. Those students will be on track to earn a bachelor’s degree and pursue careers that may have been out of reach before. More than half of the charter school’s initial class of 132 hail from families with parents who lack college degrees.

Gulf Coast University President Wilson G. Bradshaw spoke highly of the college’s initiative: “SCF has created an innovative model for student success with a collegiate school of 6th-12th grades. We are proud to partner with the college in extending this opportunity to families, and are especially impressed that SCFCS (collegiate school) exceeded its recruitment goal by enrolling 62 percent first-generation students in the first classes."

We applaud the university’s generous partnership with the college.

We also commend SCF President Lars A. Hafner and the Board of Trustees for the development of educational programs that serve the business community and provide students with more and more career opportunities.