



PRESS RELEASE

Sept. 19, 2017

Media Contact: Melissa Ludwig, 210-380-0733

CAST to open second school in series of industry-led, career-themed high schools

CAST STEM will focus on manufacturing, engineering, energy and global logistics

(SAN ANTONIO) – The Centers for Applied Science & Technology (CAST) announced today the second school in a network of industry-led, career-themed high schools in San Antonio. In partnership with Southwest ISD and Alamo Colleges District-Palo Alto College, CAST STEM will offer pathways in advanced manufacturing, engineering, energy and power, and global logistics and is slated to open with 200 ninth graders next fall.

The CAST model emphasizes real-world experience and projects, with industry partners at the table from the early stages helping to plan curriculum and projects. Toyota Motor Manufacturing Texas, Inc., CPS Energy, HoltCAT, Zachry Group, Joeris Construction and other partners will offer opportunities to design and build by working directly with heavy machinery and equipment, robotics and other advanced technology. Between summer internships, job shadowing, and mentoring by industry professionals, students will be well prepared for the job interviews they are guaranteed upon graduation.

College coursework is embedded within the high school program at CAST STEM and is supported by strong industry partnerships and both two-year and four-year higher education partners (Palo Alto College, Texas A&M University-San Antonio). In addition to work experience, students will have the opportunity to earn up to two years' worth of college credit as well as industry-recognized certificates and an associate degree.

“No matter what career students end up choosing, CAST STEM will give them a rare opportunity to explore real jobs and workplaces, make connections and relationships and enter the workforce or college with confidence and credits under their belt. CAST is free for parents, but priceless for students as they gather skills and exposure that will prepare them for their

career,” said Kate Rogers, (Executive Vice President of the Holdsworth Center), who has been spearheading the CAST effort on behalf of H-E-B Chairman and CEO Charles Butt.

The first two years of the CAST STEM program will be located on the brand new campus of Southwest Legacy High School. In the third year, students will move to Palo Alto College at the yet-to-be-built Welcome Center and Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence, facilities approved by voters in a recent bond for the Alamo Colleges District.

The two Career Academies at CAST STEM – Academy of Manufacturing & Engineering and the Academy of Global Enterprise & Energy – will align with curriculum offered through Palo Alto College’s current programs in Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, International Business, and Energy Technology.

“Serving as champions for community access is part of the core values and mission of Palo Alto College,” said Dr. Mike Flores, president of the College. “Along with our partners at Southwest ISD, we have created an opportunity with CAST STEM where students can earn a college-level education while still in high school that prepares them to fulfill future demands of San Antonio’s growing workforce.”

Southwest ISD Superintendent Lloyd Verstuyft recently named Aja Gardner to serve as CAST STEM’s inaugural principal. Previously, Gardner served as director of STEM/CTE and Advanced Academics in South San Antonio ISD and has additional experience as an assistant principal in North East ISD and as a science teacher at the John Jay Science and Engineering Academy. Gardner has a bachelor's degree in Biology Pre-Medicine from Xavier University of Louisiana, a master’s in Public Health and Medicine from St. Louis University and a doctorate in Public Health and Medicine from Walden University.

“Dr. Gardner’s unique background and experience will undoubtedly lead CAST STEM and its students to success. She views STEM as a holistic approach to preparing 21st century learners to live and work in an ever-changing technical society,” Verstuyft said.

The idea for CAST originated from a committee led by H-E-B and comprised of industry leaders, school superintendents and workforce development experts from the Alamo Colleges District, the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. The committee met for a year to study innovative high school models across Texas and the nation.

The inaugural CAST school, CAST Tech, focuses on technology and entrepreneurship and opened in August 2017 at the Fox Tech campus, immersed in the heart of downtown’s emerging Tech District. A third school in the CAST series is currently in the planning stages with focus on biotechnology.

###