

MCLA's Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation a boon for entire region

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Gov. Deval Patrick and artist Stephen Hannock take a closer look at Hannock's painting in the atrium of the new Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation at MCLA following Friday's ribbon-cutting ceremony. (Gillian Jones / New England Newspapers)

NORTH ADAMS

Biology majors Shannon Lindlau and Lydia Guerrero stood on the third floor of the newly opened \$30 million Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

They pressed their foreheads to the glass on the balcony overlooking a few hundred people below gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the first building built on campus in 40 years.

Even as freshman from Barnstable and Rockland respectively, Lindlau and Guerrero knew they were witnesses to the start of something bigger.

"I know that Western Massachusetts is trying to be up and coming," Guerrero said. "Having this and the fact that MCLA is really [cool], really growing helps in putting this area on the map."

"Both being involved in the sciences and being the first people to experience this is something very exciting," Lindlau said.

During an approximately 90-minute ceremony on Friday, various speakers, from state investors and dignitaries, local business leaders to MCLA administrators, faculty and students all took turns testifying to the strength and potential the center brought to the campus, the city of North Adams, Berkshire County, the Western Massachusetts region, the commonwealth and beyond.

Gov. Deval Patrick said the new 65,000-square-foot building is not only a physical but symbolic beacon of the 21st century. In the midst of a federal government shutdown, he said, Friday's opening of a building built during a national economic-recession era represents the commonwealth's "commitment to invest in ourselves and our own future and not leave it to chance."

He continued to outline how he believes "education, innovation and infrastructure" will be the key investments for growth of any kind in Massachusetts.

"The completion of the new center represents the efforts of countless friends and supporters on campus, in the community, in the legislative delegation and in other state offices and agencies, who all offered their tireless advocacy and support," said MCLA President Mary K. Grant.

She said the ongoing support for initiatives like this have been solidified by a range of bountiful investments, from the Patrick administration's 10-year, \$1 billion investment to develop a so-called life sciences supercluster in the state to the \$5 million capital campaign pledge to MCLA from the Feigenbaum Foundation to the establishment of a \$20,000 annual scholarship endowment in the name of the late Williamstown resident and Feigenbaum Foundation Treasurer Bernard "Bud" Riley.

North Adams Mayor Richard "Dick" Alcombright called the center a great resource for local education and a "catalyst for economic activity" for the region and



Hundreds of people pack into the atrium to listen to MCLA President Mary K. Grant before the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation. (Gillian Jones / New England Newspapers)

beyond.

"This facility is just the next step in enrichment in education in our schools and in the region," Pittsfield Mayor Daniel L. Bianchi said.

Chris Himes, MCLA's STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) coordinator, said he's already received calls from local educators wanting to bring K-12 students to the center to use its state-of-the-art laboratories and community classroom spaces.

He said he also hopes area STEM industries will want to collaborate with faculty and the students in terms of providing mentorship and helping students to be workforce-ready.

"The kinds of ripple effects that will happen, we'll never be able to put a number to," said state Sen. Benjamin B. Downing, "but this community deserves it, the college deserves it, this commonwealth deserves it."