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## **MassBay Professor Chosen to Represent 2-Year Colleges on Advisory Board of NSF Project Administered by Harvard University**

*Project will research how STEM secondary education techniques affects success at college level*

(Wellesley Hills, MA –Tuesday January 7, 2014) – MassBay Professor of Computer Science Susanne Steiger-Escobar has been selected by Harvard University to join the Advisory Board for a National Science Foundation funded project designed to evaluate computer science education at the high school level, for females in particular. The project, entitled Factors Influencing College Success in Information Technology (FICSIT), is being conducted at the Department of Science Education at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

“We are delighted to be represented on this important initiative,” said MassBay President John O’Donnell. “Students who attend two-year institutions like ours must have adequate STEM education at the secondary level if they are to succeed at college and in the workforce. This is a matter of national importance, and we are grateful for the voice we will have in these invaluable discussions. All of us on campus are proud of Professor Steiger-Escobar and wish her well on the FICSIT project.”

Susanne Steiger-Escobar has been a professor at MassBay for 16 years. She has dedicated much of her career in higher education to promoting STEM education in middle school and high school students. She has spearheaded MassBay’s [Summer Bridge program](#), an initiative co-sponsored by MassBay and [BATEC](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to uniting area educators, business leaders and practitioners to improve STEM curricula and effectiveness. MassBay’s Summer Bridge program brings high school students to campus for intensive two-week STEM workshops and optional education programming for college credit. Professor Steiger-Escobar serves as a BATEC Team Liaison. This year, she also coordinated the participation of 168 elementary and middle school students in the national Hour of Code workshops.

The FICSIT project will solicit information in order to predict success in introductory computer courses in college. The group will survey roughly 12,000 students regarding their experiences with computing in high school and outside school. A questionnaire will also be administered to instructors to learn about the type, characteristics and pedagogies of the college courses they teach. Similar methodologies have been used by Harvard to determine what factors predict success in introductory college courses in physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics. Dr. Philip Sadler, Director of Science Education at Harvard is the FICSIT Principal Investigator; and Gerhard Sonnert, a research associate at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, is the co-Principal Investigator.

“I am excited to be part of the FICSIT initiative and am grateful for the opportunity,” said Professor Steiger-Escobar. “I look forward to assisting my colleagues in mining information that could have a profound impact on how STEM education is delivered at the secondary levels in America.”

*MassBay awards associate degrees and certificates in over 70 academic programs in a wide range of career-driven subjects ranging from accounting and automotive technology to forensic DNA science and early childhood education. The College’s facilities in Wellesley Hills, Framingham and Ashland house day, evening and weekend classes that meet the needs of degree-seeking students and career minded life-long learners. MassBay is the most affordable higher education option in MetroWest, and with more than 100 online courses offered per semester, MassBay is also a convenient way to earn college credentials. Since its founding in 1961, MassBay has been accredited by several governing bodies and strives to meet the needs of the diverse local communities it serves. More information about MassBay and the upcoming spring semester can be found at [www.massbay.edu](http://www.massbay.edu), or by calling (781) 239-2411.*