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News Release

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USDA and Community College System of New Hampshire Announce River Valley Community College Expansion to Lebanon

(Lebanon, NH) August 25, 2015 – Officials from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Community College System of New Hampshire and U.S. Rep. Ann McLane Kuster Tuesday announced that the former Lebanon College will reopen as a branch of River Valley Community College next year. The Community College System of New Hampshire purchased the Lebanon campus using a \$1.6 million USDA Rural Development loan.

“Strong community colleges play a vital role in ensuring the economic and social vibrancy of rural America,” said USDA Rural Development New Hampshire and Vermont State Director Ted Brady. “The USDA is excited to follow President Obama’s lead in promoting rural community colleges through supporting projects such as River Valley Community College’s expansion.”

Brady noted that Kuster orchestrated the partnership between the Community College System of New Hampshire and USDA who funded the new project in part thanks to language the Congresswoman championed in the 2014 Farm Bill directing USDA to work more closely with community colleges across the country.

“I am thrilled to congratulate River Valley Community College, the Community College System of New Hampshire, the USDA, and the many partners that made today’s announcement possible,” said Congresswoman Kuster. “This investment by the USDA is a critical one to the community of Lebanon and the entire region—it will help create a skilled workforce, create jobs, and support local businesses for years to come. I fought to include this initiative in the 2014 Farm Bill knowing that there is tremendous potential for the partnership with USDA and the Community College System, and today represents the first of many projects that we will embark on using the USDA’s new rural community college initiative.”

River Valley Community College’s expansion to Lebanon will complement its main campus in Claremont and a satellite campus in Keene which combined serve approximately 1,000 students. With the grand opening of River Valley Community College at Lebanon in the fall of 2016, College

President Alicia Harvey-Smith expects to initially increase enrollment by 500 students with future room for expansion. She said that the new campus will serve as a hub for workforce development and business and industry training. In developing the new campus, River Valley Community College partnered with two of the region's most prominent employers, Hypertherm and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, to ensure that potential students receive industry relevant academic and professional experiences in one of the region's most economically vibrant areas.

"River Valley Community College is grateful to Congresswoman Kuster for her commitment to Rural Communities and for supporting the availability of USDA Funding for vital projects that directly impact the economic development of our region through expanding education, training and workforce development", said Dr. Harvey-Smith, President.

Following the news conference in downtown Lebanon, community college leaders and financial partners from across New England met to discuss the collaboration that led to the River Valley success with the USDA. The half day convening featured a keynote address from the President of the Rural Community College Alliance, Dr. Randy Smith, USDA officials from Washington, DC with expertise in working with community colleges, and remarks from Kuster. The discussion focused around how community colleges could leverage public and private partnerships to accomplish future infrastructure development projects.

President Obama has emphasized the importance of community college throughout his presidency. Brady said that USDA RD is working to identify future opportunities across Vermont and New Hampshire to help both community colleges and technical colleges reach more rural students.

USDA, through its RD mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$212 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural areas. For more information on Rural Development visit rd.usda.gov/nh or contact USDA RD at (602) 223-6035.

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