

EDUCATION

Pot moves from dorm to classroom

5 Mass. schools offer classes or programs related to cannabis industry

By HILARY BURNS

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Massachusetts colleges are experimenting with marijuana.

At least five schools in Massachusetts offer or are rolling out classes or certificate programs for students who want to work in the state's burgeoning cannabis industry.

Clark University in Worcester started a graduate certificate in regulatory affairs for cannabis control; Mount Wachusett Community College, also in central Massachusetts, now offers an online career-training program; Holyoke Community College has created a Cannabis Education Center; and Boston University is offering an undergraduate course in the spring for students to research and recommend policy that would make the adult-use marijuana business in the state more socio-economically equitable.

In addition, Roxbury Community College is working with the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, Greater Boston Legal Services, the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, the Commonwealth Dispensary Association, Lawyers for Civil Rights Boston and cannabis industry members on a new educational program.

Universities and colleges around the state are starting to consider what programs and course offerings would be most helpful to students interested in participating in the cannabis industry, which Massachusetts legalized adult-use marijuana in 2016.

"I think it's a great opportunity for academic institutions to reach out, understand and become part of the shaping of this industry," said Marion McNabb, co-founder and CEO of Cannabis Community Care and Research Network, or C3RN. "It's essential because the academic sector has been prohibited from studying, educating and understanding cannabis recreationally and medicinally."

McNabb worked with Holyoke Community College to open the school's cannabis education center last month. The new center will host industry events, provide education and workforce training opportunities to people in the Pioneer Valley who want to work in the cannabis industry. McNabb hopes C3RN can be a resource to more schools to help them build new programs in the cannabis industry.

"We have the opportunity to collaborate and share information — it's a new industry and a new technical field, so I think Massachusetts is uniquely suited to create a collaborative mega-center of excellence that can put this state ahead of others and put us on the global map," McNabb said.

Meetings with municipalities and local government offi-

cial last year spurred Clark's School of Professional Studies to create the graduate certificate in regulatory affairs for cannabis control, said John LaBrie, dean of the School of Professional Studies and associate provost for professional graduate education.

LaBrie said the new certificate program, which is offered online, will help students understand public-policy issues involved in the cultivation,

nity College started offering an online certificate program for cannabis studies in early 2017 with a partner called Online Cannabis Education. There are currently 24 students enrolled in the program, which results in a "master of marijuana" certificate.

"We try to be a little ahead of the curve with workforce needs," said Rachel Frick Cardelle, the college's vice president of lifelong learning

petition for students, alumni and faculty.

Other colleges have dipped their toes in the cannabis industry without offering degree or certificate programs. The University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth runs a panel of experts called the Cannabis Advancement Series, and Babson College has hosted student-led cannabis symposia. Also, MIT and Harvard University received a

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distribution, sales and regulation of medical- and nonmedical-use of cannabis. The state is trying to "take something that was once illegal and move it to legal framework," LaBrie said. That means there are educational opportunities to train a workforce as the new, legal industry grows, LaBrie added.

There are 20 students from around the country currently enrolled in Clark's new certificate program. LaBrie said Clark will likely expand its cannabis course offerings and programs down the line. The school will also offer public events, including one with the Worcester Chamber of Commerce Nov. 13 called Cannabis Implications for Business, Community and You.

Mount Wachusett Commu-

and workforce development. "Clearly, the medical marijuana providers needed a skilled workforce and as Massachusetts headed down the road of recreational use as well, that industry is only going to grow. We see our job as providing training for people who want to get training in any of the legitimate industries we have in the Commonwealth."

Boston University is offering a new undergraduate course in the spring that will match students with members of the state's cannabis regulatory regime and entrepreneurs to investigate the historically disproportionate impact of cannabis prohibition on people of color and whether legalization will benefit these same populations. BU also hosts an annual Cannabis Startup Com-

\$9 million gift from alumnus Charles Broderick earlier this year to research the science of cannabinoids.

Still, Jennifer Flanagan, commissioner at the state's Cannabis Control Commission, remains skeptical of Massachusetts colleges and universities offering classes on cannabis.

"I think each individual institution needs to take a temperature on where they would like to be in this space, given fact it is still federally illegal and students do receive financial aid," Flanagan said. "They certainly need to know all of what goes into it. Some schools have certificate and professional development programs rather than degrees — each school needs to make that decision for themselves."