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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North, Memorial Freshmen Start First Day of College ***Associate Degree Academy through CVTC kicks off with signing ceremony***

Eau Claire, WI – Four months ago, Lauren Kainz, 14, was still in eighth grade. Wednesday was her first day of college.

Kainz, an Eau Claire North High School freshman, is one of 12 North students and 9 from Memorial to enroll in the inaugural class of the Eau Claire School District Business Management Associate Degree Academy through Chippewa Valley Technical College. Students who complete the four-year program will graduate from high school with both a high school diploma and an associate degree from CVTC.

CVTC and the Eau Claire School District announced an agreement creating the program in January. CVTC initiated the first such program in the state at River Falls High School two years ago.

The academy kicked off with a ceremony at CVTC Wednesday morning with the students signing commitments to the program after listening to some encouraging words from CVTC, school district and community leaders.

“I thought it was such a good opportunity because it saves me time and money,” Kainz said of her reason for enrolling. She added that she’s excited about the classes. “It’s something I’ve never done before and it’s different.”

“I absolutely encouraged her to sign up for this,” said her mother, Barb Kainz. “I wish I had that opportunity. It’s going to give her more options than a typical high school graduate for getting a post-high school job, or even getting a job while in high school. She’ll have a head-start, and she’s getting free education.”

Because of the partnership between CVTC and the Eau Claire School District, the students do not have to pay the tuition and fees that regular CVTC students working toward the same degree pay. With the transferrable credits, graduates could finish a bachelor’s degree in as little as two additional years of college.

“I get a better chance to show what I can do,” said North freshman Averyon Sands, 14. “And it’s a better chance for me to get an education and get a step up on other people.”

CVTC President Bruce Barker said the program points toward the future of education.

“Over a hundred years ago, we created a three-level system, but 100 years ago a lot of us were riding horses and at CVTC we were training telegraph operators. The world has changed and it’s time that education also changes. We realize that people don’t learn at three different levels. We realize that education and learning are lifelong ventures. This new approach really reflects that.”

“This partnership between CVTC and Eau Claire schools is huge,” said Dave Minor, president of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce. “This isn’t going on across the country. Watching two educational institutions partner like this to try to figure out that next step that we have to do is exciting. It tells me they are trying to prepare that next generation, that next workforce, the best that they can.”

The program uses a combination of existing CVTC college credit classes offered in the Eau Claire schools and some new classes needed to complete the 61-credit associate degree. In addition to classes as part of their regular high school class schedule, the students will also take some online and summer classes.

“I give you credit that you are investing your time in this program, because it’s a rigorous program,” Dave Oldenberg, Memorial principal, told the students.

It was just sinking in to Lauren Kainz that she would be taking college classes already. “It’s a little intimidating, but I think if I pay attention, I can get it,” she said.

“We want you to leave here this morning with the sense that ‘yes, I can do this,’ ” said Kristel Tavare, director of PK-12 initiatives for CVTC. “We have three cohorts of students at River Falls High School working on this same program. So, yes, you can do it. We’ve seen it done.”

“I know you are capable and we have great teachers and great support systems,” Barker said.

“If there is an early alert of a student who is struggling, I will work directly with them and their instructors and guidance counselors to ensure they stay on track,” said Keith Stearns, high school academy specialist at CVTC.

The first graduates of the academy are anticipated in May 2023.

With over 97 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today’s jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$46,816.

Cutline:

North High School freshmen, from left, Janaya Goldbach, Alaina Halvorsen and Averyon Sands sign their commitments to the Business Management Associate Degree Academy at CVTC Wednesday, September 18. Students who complete the program will graduate from high school with both a high school diploma and an associate degree from CVTC.

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