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Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills (VCATS) Wins National Award for Excellence in Technology-based Economic Development

-- SSTI award is third national honor for Virginia's Advanced Technology Credentialing Group --

RICHMOND, Virginia –The State Science and Technology Institute (SSTI) has awarded the Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills (VCATS) its highest award for exceptional achievement in technology-based workforce development. VCATS, a statewide initiative co-led by the Virginia Biotechnology Association (VaBIO), the Virginia Manufacturers Association and Training & Development Corporation (TDC), is leading a new employer-validated certification system and an innovative employer-designed training program for advanced manufacturing technicians. The “Excellence in Technology-based Economic Development Award” was presented to VCATS Project Director Sheryl Bryan at the SSTI national convention October 18, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Designed to celebrate exceptional achievement in addressing the elements that have been found in successful technology-based economies, the SSTI awards program recognizes efforts to improve state and regional economies through science, technology, and innovation.

“This initiative responds to a key economic development challenge of both replacing manufacturing workers who are retiring and upgrading skills of current employees in order to preserve a healthy high-technology business base,” said Dan Berglund, SSTI president and CEO. “VCATS should be applauded for its success in bringing together a number of related state activities under one umbrella. This initiative provides an excellent example of strong public-private partnerships and successful integration of programs and leveraging of resources.”

Winners of the inaugural Excellence in TBED Awards were recognized across six categories, including promoting research, entrepreneurial development, a skilled workforce, and innovation in existing companies. The winning initiatives were selected through a competitive process by committees of accomplished TBED practitioners and policymakers serving as judges.

The SSTI award is the third major award for the one-year-old initiative. VCATS won a \$1.5 million grant by the U.S. Department of Labor for the President’s High Growth Job Training Initiative. In addition, VCATS was the winner of the 2007 Southern Growth Innovator Award, given by the Southern Growth Policies Board. The VCATS project was chosen from more than 100 nominees in the Southern region as an outstanding initiative in workforce development.

For additional information about the project, contact Sheryl Bryan, Project Director, at 804-643-6360.