

## WVU students partner with Health Sciences and Technology Academy for third time –

See more at: <http://wvutoday.wvu.edu/n/2015/03/11/wvu-students-partner-with-health-sciences-and-technology-academy-for-third-time#sthash.UywCAI6P.dpuf>

West Virginia's Health Sciences and Technology Academy has partnered with students at West Virginia University to foster relationships and to spread awareness of its program, which provides education opportunities for underrepresented high school students in the state. A group of 20 strategic communications capstone students in the WVU Reed College of Media are working under the direction of Rita Colistra on two campaigns. The class has been divided in half, one focusing on public affairs and the other on alumni relations. The public affairs campaign's primary focus is raising awareness of HSTA among state legislators, several of whom were recently elected. In addition to connecting with HSTA clubs around the state, the team is working with the organization to host a HSTA Day at the Capitol event Thursday, March 12, in Charleston. Information about HSTA's successes will be displayed, and students will present their legislators with certificates of honorary HSTA membership. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin is also scheduled to proclaim March as "HSTA Month" at the event. The formation of a HSTA Alumni Association is the central goal of the second campaign. The alumni relations team is working to reconnect HSTA with its graduates through a formal organization. An inaugural alumni reunion event in April will serve as a platform to strengthen the relationship between HSTA and its graduates, as well as to initiate the alumni organization. The purpose of the association is to mutually benefit HSTA and its alumni through opportunities to enhance the program for continued growth throughout West Virginia. This semester marks the third time HSTA has partnered with Colistra and her students. "These students serve as educators and advocates for the HSTA program both during the legislative session in Charleston, by educating our representatives, and in communities where they do their capstone projects," said Ann Chester, HSTA director. This partnership allows students to apply skills learned in the classroom to a real-world situation. Hands-on experiences – which include working directly with clients and planning events – provide students a glimpse of what their careers will be like in the industry once they graduate. "Unlike most college courses, the content in this class is not hypothetical. The course is unique, as it allows us to serve as strategic communications professionals in a classroom setting," said Kelly Williams, a WVU student athlete and account executive for the alumni relations campaign. "Valued guidance from Dr. Colistra encourages us to expand our skill set in each aspect of the industry, which will help us thrive in our professions post-graduation." Founded in 1994, the Health Sciences & Academy is a high school math and science program that aims to increase the number of underrepresented West Virginia students who pursue careers in the health, science, math, engineering or technology-related fields. Upon completion of the program, students are eligible for tuition waivers at state colleges and professional schools. The program specifically targets minority, rural, financially disadvantaged and first-generation college students.

For more information about the program, visit [www.WV-hsta.org](http://www.WV-hsta.org). -WVU- Is/ab/03/11/15

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