

## Preparing Long Island students for high-tech jobs

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Technology's far-reaching grasp on everyday life never ceases to amaze Judy Murrah. But the senior director for information technology at Motorola in Holtsville admits she sees tasks often taken for granted - operating mobile scanning computers used in shipping, or teens text messaging from a cell phone - as future employment skills.

"Every job these days and so many of our daily activities seem to need some type of technical skill or background," Murrah said. "So many of the things that kids are doing today actually are the basis for technology of the future."

That's one reason Murrah and Motorola are involved in the Outreach Program for Long Island Technology Education (OPLITE) at Stony Brook University. The program's goal is to help middle school and high school students connect with high-tech careers.

"The purpose is to fill jobs of the future," she said, ". . . by developing a pipeline through a collaboration with school districts."

Motorola is one of about 25 companies in the second-year program, said Scott Passeser, director of industrial outreach for Stony Brook's Center of Excellence in Wireless & Information Technology. Recent studies by the New York State Department of Labor and the American Electronics Association, a tech-based trade group, suggest that Long Island will have a need for high-tech workers into the next decade, Passeser said. Job growth in some areas is likely to be 6 percent or more over the next 10 years.

"If you look at the profile of Long Island, tech-based companies are here," said Gary Huth, the state labor department's principal economist for Long Island. "When the economy does start to turn around, the keys to a real economic recovery will be technology, productivity and innovation. High-tech jobs address these issues."

Through OPLITE, representatives of companies like Motorola, IBM, Northrop Grumman and Viotech Solutions have been visiting schools in about 35 districts for the past year to show students the advantages of careers in engineering, robotics, computer science and other advanced fields.

On May 7, OPLITE is staging a career fair for high school students (grades 8 through 12) at the Stony Brook Research Park. Registration begins Wednesday at [cewit.org](http://cewit.org) and is limited to about 300 students and 100 parents. The fair offers laboratory tours, demonstrations and video presentations.

"The more we talk to the younger students, the more we can help channel their thinking toward technology-based jobs," said Satya Sharma, executive director for Stony Brook's Center for Excellence. "Meeting with people working in these jobs will help young people understand what their options are."