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News Release

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Citizens League Unveils New Vision For Students In Saint Paul

SAINT PAUL, Minn., May 25, 2005 -- Amid calls for high school reform, the Citizens League today unveiled a new vision for the way Minnesota schools think about higher education.

In a report titled, "A New Vision for Saint Paul Schools: Preparing All Students for Success in Higher Education," the Citizens League outlines a plan to create a model for improving access to and success in higher education in the Saint Paul Public Schools. If successful, the plan could become a model for other school districts across the state to do the same.

According to Todd Lefko, chair of the Citizens League High School to Higher Education Study Committee, which worked with the Saint Paul Public Schools to develop the plan, improving access to higher education is an issue critical to the future of our state.

"Minnesota is changing," said Lefko. "In the next 10 years, the number of K-12 students will shrink while the number of students of color, who have been less likely to go on to higher education, will increase. To compete in the global economy, we need to increase the number of students, especially students of color, who successfully complete higher education."

To do that, the committee-- which included education professionals, parents, teachers, school counselors, representatives from the state's higher education systems, business and community leaders and other concerned citizens-- suggests that the school district, with the support of institutions of higher education, the business community, nonprofit organizations and the philanthropic community, take several steps:

- **Expect that all students can pursue higher education.** Research strongly suggests that underrepresented students are given less encouragement by teachers to attend higher education.

- **Prepare all students to succeed in higher education.** Nationally, African American, Latino, American Indian and low-income eighth graders are twice as likely as white or upper-income students to be in remedial math in high school, according to the study.
- **Support students in planning and preparing for higher education.** Underrepresented students and their parents are unlikely to be familiar with the educational system, postsecondary options, career planning and the higher education admission process, the report states.
- **Help all students overcome financial barriers to higher education.** Financial aid has not kept pace with the increasing cost of attending higher education. The average Pell Grant now covers only 25 percent of the total costs at public four-year colleges, down from 47 percent in 1975.
- **Work with partners to evaluate progress toward preparing all students to succeed in higher education.** Monitoring, assessing and reporting the performance of both students and intervention programs increases program effectiveness, the study concludes.

The report details 27 recommendations to help Saint Paul Public Schools take the steps listed above, some of which the district already has in place, according to Patricia Harvey, superintendent of the Saint Paul Public Schools.

"This report confirms that we have taken many of the right steps to put in place the supports that help all students prepare for higher education," said Harvey.

"That's why an impressive number of our students go on to four-year, two-year and technical schools. I'm thankful to everyone who helped facilitate the study and I'm looking forward to working together as we intensify our college access efforts."

In addition to the Citizens League and the Saint Paul Public Schools, several other organizations were involved in the study and developing the report, including the Morning Foundation and Support Our Schools (SOS). The Saint Paul Foundation and the St. Paul Travelers Foundation (NYSE:STA) provided major funding for the report.

Mary Pickard, president of the St. Paul Travelers Foundation, sees a clear business case for improving access to higher education for Saint Paul students.

"The quality of our workforce and the ongoing success of the business community in the Twin Cities have a direct correlation to the quality of education we offer in our public schools," Pickard said. "As a large employer here in Minnesota, we at St. Paul Travelers continually seek highly skilled and educated workers. In our industry, there simply aren't many positions available for workers who have less than a college education. Making higher education opportunities available to all Minnesota students is of critical importance to us, as well as to the future of Minnesota's economy."

Carleen Rhodes, president of The Saint Paul Foundation, added her thanks to the Citizen's League for undertaking the study and said, "This is not just an issue that our schools must address, but a community issue. We need to join together to support the school system that is preparing the next generation of leaders to ensure our community is ready to meet the challenges of a changing world."

In the coming months, a team from the Saint Paul Public Schools will consider the recommendations, identify funding sources and recruit schools to participate in a pilot project.

The Citizens League is an independent, non-partisan organization that promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing public policy, forging recommendations and advocating for their adoption.

The complete report is available online at www.citizensleague.net.

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