University of Minnesota's Commitment to America's Promise

1. Description of the University and Selected Colleges

Founded in 1851, the University of Minnesota, with its four campuses and six research and outreach centers, is one of the most comprehensive universities in the country and ranks among the most prestigious universities in the United States. It is the state's land-grant university with a strong tradition of education and public service, and also a major research institution that consistently ranks among the top 20 public universities in the nation. Over 58,000 undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled in the University campuses, and students can earn degrees in 373 fields of study. 8,442 full-time and part-time faculty are employed system wide.

More than 300 different University programs serve children and youth or assist other organizations that benefit young people. Through the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the University is present in each of Minnesota's 87 counties, and averages 700,000 contacts with Minnesota citizens every year in areas ranging from crop management to effective parenting and youth development. Over 250,000 youth participate in 4-H programs as part of the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

The University of Minnesota is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth, to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community, and to the application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, nation, and the world. The institution's mission is threefold: research and discovery; teaching and learning; and outreach and public service.

The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) is the largest of the four campuses and is situated in a large, metropolitan area. It is made up of 19 colleges and offers 161 bachelor's degrees, 218 master's degrees, 114 doctoral degrees, and 5 professional degrees.

The University of Minnesota, Duluth offers 11 bachelor's degrees in 70 majors and graduate programs in 15 different fields. Its School of Medicine offers a two-year basic science program leading to an M.D. through the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

The University of Minnesota, Morris offers baccalaureate degrees in 27 majors and course work in seven preprofessional areas. Its distinctive mission and strong academic quality have repeatedly earned it recognition in U.S. News and World Report, Money magazine, and other guides to competitively ranked schools.

The University of Minnesota, Crookston offers 19 technical bachelor's and 13 associate's degrees, and was the first campus in the nation to issue laptop computers to all full-time students. Microsoft, IBM, and PC Weekly Magazine have featured it as a national leader in innovative polytechnic education.

The sites of other University programs and outreach include: The University of Minnesota at Rochester, Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station, Cloquet Forestry

Center, Horticultural Research Center at Excelsior, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum at Chanhassen, Sand Plain Research Farm at Becker, and research and outreach centers at Rosemount, Crookston, Grand Rapids, Morris, Lamberton, and Waseca.

2. Promises the University will Address

The University of Minnesota already does and will continue to address all five of the promises. Research has shown that while each of the five promises can provide a clear benefit to children and youth it is often the accumulation of multiple resources that most matter. Given the breadth, size, and nature of the University and the numerous opportunities to address each of the five promise areas, we will use the overall framework as a way to both stimulate and align our efforts to reach out and support the development of young people around the state. As noted below this will include a combination of programmatic, academic and volunteer efforts.

3. Description of Proposed Commitment

Although the University has long worked with children, youth, and families in a variety of ways, we believe it is now time to align many of these efforts as well as several new ones under the unifying theme, "***Realizing the Promise of the University for the Children and Youth of Minnesota***." The effort will be co-led by Dr. Dale Blyth, the Director of the Center for 4-H Youth Development and Assistant Dean for the University of Minnesota Extension Service, and Dr. Martha Erickson, the Director of the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium. They will report directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost of the University, Robert Bruininks. Together they will coordinate multiple University efforts for America's Promise across several colleges and campuses. Colleges include but are not limited to the College of Education and Human Development, College of Human Ecology, College of Liberal Arts, General College, and the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Directors from the Office of Special Learning Opportunities (OSLO) and the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health are also involved along with the vice presidents for Institutional Relations and Multicultural and Academic Affairs. We will, of course, continue to work with Nathalie Pyle from Minneapolis Promise for Youth and Donna Gillen from the Minnesota Alliance with Youth, who have been working for years to bring these five promises to Minnesota's youth.

Since the nature of the University's commitment is dynamic by design, it will evolve over time and in response to the needs of Minnesota communities, families and youth. Below are a few highlights of the nature, breadth, and depth of our commitments. They are organized around three themes that take advantage of the role and mission of a land grant university. These themes are: building a deeper understanding of the five resources youth need, strategically communicating about those resources, and strengthening and expanding outreach efforts with youth.

The University is committed to ***Building A Deeper Understanding*** of the five resources youth need to succeed and how they can most effectively and appropriately be nurtured at

different ages and in different communities. This commitment is central to the core education, research, and outreach nature of our University. This commitment includes:

- Commissioning a special issue of a University publication that would focus around the five promises, what research supports and challenges each, and the types of policies and programs that are most likely to impact youth.
- Sponsoring a series of public lectures by leading authorities from around the University and the country on research, policy, and programs related to positive, community-based youth development approaches.
- Sponsoring a Spring 2001 conference for researchers and practitioners, as part of our sesquicentennial celebration, on the five resources youth need and how families, communities, and organizations can support the development of young people.
- Conducting, with Search Institute, a reflective review of the state, community, and urban efforts that have been inspired by America's Promise in its first three years and the factors that seem to matter most in their success.
- Co-sponsoring the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and Minneapolis Promise for Youth Summer 2001 institute -- including multi-site teleconferencing -- that *reflects* upon our understanding of what has been accomplished in Minnesota so far; *shares* these and other lessons learned with people from around the state, region, and nation; and *helps prepare communities to act* with youth on providing these resources in effective ways.

The University of Minnesota is also committed to ***Strategically Communicating*** about the five resources in a way that helps shape the public's understanding as well as improves practice based on lessons learned from reflective practice, research and evaluation. This commitment will include some of the activities above plus:

- Expanding the University's involvement with the *Five Days of Promise* at the 2000 and 2001 Minnesota State Fairs including assistance with the building of another house, highlighting the Promises as part of the University's presence at the Fair, and a range of activities on "Promise Avenue" in front of the 4-H Building.
- Creating a high-technology continuing education course designed for parents, youth workers, and volunteers around the state that helps others understand what is known about youth development, the five resources and how they can be nurtured in, and by, the youth in their communities.
- Creating a University web-site organized around and aligned with the five promises that can help parents, youth, schools, and communities tap into best practices and promising approaches about the five promises and that highlight specific University programs that bring these to life (see attached initial matrix of University efforts in each promise area).
- Facilitate a process of informing county government and Extension Committees in the state of this effort and encourage commitments to become "counties of promise" working in partnership with the Association of Minnesota Counties and the MN Alliance with Youth.

Finally, the University of Minnesota is committed to ***Aligning and Expanding Our Outreach Efforts With Youth*** in ways that highlight the five promises and elaborate on multiple effective ways in which they can be developed with, and promised to, the youth of our cities and the entire state. This component will include:

- Strengthening educational efforts that both expose and increase the preparation, access, and success of Minnesota's youth, especially youth of color, to the variety of opportunities and challenges offered by post-secondary education as well as increase youth's sense that these can be part of their own future
- Creating a publication and web resource that helps describe and organize the many University efforts with children and youth around the five promises and make them more visible and accessible to various groups on each campus and in the community
- Stimulating creative opportunities for our more than 58,000 youth on four campuses around the state to engage in fulfilling one or more of the promises by such strategies as connecting it to our new undergraduate minor in leadership; clarifying ways to meet undergraduate degree requirements around service and connection to community; supporting the variety of efforts by our Office of Multicultural and Academic Affairs to reach new audiences, and efforts around building effective citizens for the next century.
- Developing a University-based "promise fellows corps" that could
  a) help continue the work of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth in the state,
  b) support the quality and growth of specific University initiatives and programs already in operation (such as a major literacy initiative), and
  c) facilitate the creation of new efforts around experientially-based after school programs in science, medicine, technology, environment, and the arts
- Defining multiple opportunities for the over 250,000 youth associated with the University of Minnesota Extension Service's 4-H youth development programs to become involved in promise keeping around the state including community pride service projects, cross-age mentoring, community clubs, and a host of similar and new efforts underway.
- Selecting and promoting specific initiatives to anchor and visbly demonstrate the power of the University to mobilize youth, students, alumni, and citizens around issues that matter for youth (e.g., literacy, adolescent health, multicultural understanding)

In short, the University of Minnesota is committed to increased awareness, understanding, and implementation of promise efforts that reach real youth in real places. It utilizes the unique strengths of a land grant university to engage with the community and jointly build diverse, multi-faceted responses that can impact how people think and utilize their energy. By aligning many of the University's current and new efforts around the five promises, we hope to increase their visibility, enhance their effectiveness, and expand the size and nature of what is done.

4. Locations Where Commitment Touches Down

The University of Minnesota Extension Service has offices in every county around the state and its Center for 4-H Youth Development will work with local Extension staff to create awareness of the Promises and help implement the University's commitment. These efforts will involve support for the over 70 current communities of promise with information, research syntheses, and helpful approaches to successfully getting youth connected to the five resources needed for success. In addition, the University of Minnesota Extension Service will work with the Association of Minnesota Counties to help Minnesota's 87 counties become "counties of promise" that are aware of and support the five promises to and with youth.

5. Description of Implementation and Timeline for Commitment

The University seeks to make a two-year commitment from June of 2000 through August of 2002. This timeframe provides for continuity with the current Promise efforts in the state and a year of transition to make sure the sun-setting of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and Minneapolis Promise organizations in June 2001 does not end the fine efforts underway around the state.

The launch of the commitment would take place June 13 during a visit by former U.S. General Colin Powell to the University for a rally and press conference. University students and over 400 youth from around the state who are participating in an annual 4-H youth leadership conference will participate along with community partners and representatives from multiple colleges.

This summer we will work to align current and new University efforts to the five promises, develop the web-site, and begin communicating strategically around the promises. The summer will end with Five days of Promise at the State Fair and the activities associated with that successful event from last year.

In the Fall, a variety of programs will be engaged to consider the ramifications of the five promises for their work, how students can be recruited into these programs, and new programs or opportunities developed.

The first year will end with the Summer Institute sponsored by the Minnesota Alliance with Youth. This will include a report on the University's first year of the commitment and plans for the second year.

The 2001-2002 cycle will focus on transition of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and expanding efforts to utilize the information and program options generated the first year. It is here that expansion of the number of youth reached will most likely occur. A final report and event will be coordinated with the 2002 State Fair.

6. Number of Children Reached

Given the nature, breadth and depth of this commitment to hundreds of communities and the involvement of multiple colleges and campuses, it is not possible to estimate the

number of youth currently reached or to be reached via this enhanced and focused effort. Since only part of the commitment involves increased numbers of volunteers, it is primarily through efforts to improve how people understand and implement work on the promises that the University's commitment will be felt. Thus much of the impact will be through other partnerships and organizations working on the promises. Nonetheless, the University will encourage specific units working with youth to both track their commitments and expand them to the extent feasible and appropriate. By the expansion of work through new partnerships, alignment of current opportunities with the five promises, and deliberate support for other efforts that may benefit from what the University does, the University is confident that there will be a significant number of new youth reached with multiple promises and higher quality efforts.

7. Nature of New and Expanded Commitments

Given the complexity of the University and the multitude of things already underway, much of the commitment's effort will be toward expanding and aligning what is done around the promises. A select number of visible and focused efforts are planned and will emerge sequentially over the course of the first six months.. These "anchor projects" will be the primary focus for new development and expanded efforts. It is too early in the process to definitively delineate these efforts but they will likely include some of the following:

- The major literacy and reading initiative (PROTECT, TEACH)
- A major push to help pre-collegiate youth gain experience in a university setting – especially among youth of color, immigrants, and those for whom it would be the first generation to attend college (TEACH, MENTOR)
- Expanded support for and launching of a visible after school program initiative (PROTECT, TEACH)
- Support for youth voices and youth as resources to their communities (TEACH, SERVE)
- Coordinated training of professionals and volunteers who work with children and youth (MENTOR, NURTURE)

Once these initiatives are more fully framed and multiple partners within the University and around the community have agreed, they will become an integrated part of this effort.

8. Resources to Fulfill Commitment

Although the University is able and willing to commit a number of resources to this effort, the University does not have all the necessary resources in hand to complete this complex set of activities by itself. Instead, it is committed to using its resources as possible match and seeking support from partners, friends, donors, and possibly the legislature. A major $1.3 billion private fundraising campaign is underway currently. Ways to connect these two efforts are being explored. Additional possibilities created by the partnership with America's Promise and its commitment makers will also be explored as a way to expand the visible component of the University's work with children, youth, and families.

9. Institutional Tracking of Commitment

The implementation of the multiple components of the three elements of the University's commitment delineated above will be monitored regularly and reports provided to the provost for regular meetings with the Council of Deans and Board of Regents. The University will also make a good faith effort to count programs that are stimulated by this effort, the people they reach, the students at the University who become engaged in the promises, and the expansion of existing programs. This monitoring will include hits on the web site and an on-line reporting mechanism connected to a searchable database. Finally, we will search for ways to estimate the resources leveraged and the multiplying effect of the education and research work done.

10. Partner Organizations

Over the next year we will work closely with both the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and Minneapolis Promise to make sure our efforts complement and support their efforts. In addition, we shall seek a more formal partnership with the Association of Minnesota Counties around this effort.

11. Coordination with Local Communities of Promise

Members of the University, including Dale Blyth who co-chairs this effort, already sit on the Steering Committee for the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and on the committee planning transitioning of the Alliance's work in June 2001. As our commitment evolves will explore other linkages with communities, schools, and places of promise around the state.