



Tuesday, October 5, 2004

OU programs receive nearly \$100,000 in grants

Pontiac, Mich., Oct. 5, 2004 – The National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) announced it has awarded two grants totaling nearly \$100,000 in education funding from the SBC Foundation to promote college readiness for low-income students in Pontiac. SBC Foundation grants will support Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a federal program that helps youth from low-income communities attain a postsecondary education, and Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), a program headed by Oakland University's School of Business Administration, which teaches economically disadvantaged teens. The grants will aid Oakland University, in partnership with the School District of the City of Pontiac, Oakland Community College, the State of Michigan, and the Pontiac Collaborative, in increasing the rate of college-bound students at Jefferson/Whittier Middle School and Pontiac Central High School by providing professional development for teachers and after-school programs to students.

Jefferson/Whittier Middle School will receive \$50,000 in funds to provide teachers with instructional technology training, allowing them to integrate technology into the curriculum in order to enable students to improve grades and raise performance on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP).

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), will receive nearly \$50,000 in funds to focus programming in three areas: mentoring of Pontiac Central High School juniors and seniors by Oakland University students; foster skill building in math, science, and technology; and develop self-efficacy and a stronger sense of self-reliance through experiential training.

Selected through a competitive grants program managed by NCCEP, the SBC Foundation grants will fund 79 collaborative partnerships across the SBC 13-state service area. Sixty existing GEAR UP partnerships will use the funds to support a variety of community-focused education initiatives, including: after-school programs to help students in math, science, reading and technology; training and assistance for teachers in the use of technology in the classroom; and technology usage to enhance measurements of student achievement and program impact. Funds from the SBC Foundation grant also will seed the establishment of 19 new K-16 education partnerships based on the GEAR UP model.

"SBC's support of education is built on the belief that every child should have opportunities to succeed," said Brian Norman, external affairs director, SBC Michigan. "Most of the fastest-growing jobs this decade will require education beyond high school. In supporting GEAR UP, we fund proven effective programs that will provide low-income students with the tools they need to prepare them for lifelong success."

According to a Department of Education study, high academic achievers from low-income families are only one-fifth as likely to enroll in college as similar students from high-income families. GEAR UP seeks to address this disparity through innovative partnerships. GEAR UP, enacted as a result of Congress' passage of the Higher Education Amendment of 1998, encourages students in grades 6-12 to stay in school and apply for college. The program currently serves 1.2 million students nationwide and more than 2,000 organizations currently participate in GEAR UP partnerships. GEAR UP partnerships typically consist of collaborations between public school districts, universities, community colleges, community groups and/or businesses.

"Research shows that economically disadvantaged students face many more hurdles on the path to a meaningful education and a rewarding career," said Lynn Hockenberger, director of Learning Resources and GEAR UP, Oakland University. "The GEAR UP program practices are an effective catalyst for positive impact on benchmarks ranging from standardized test scores to graduation rates. Through the SBC Foundation's generous support, GEAR UP programs will help Pontiac youth succeed in middle and high school and prepare for a college-level education."

"GEAR UP helps ensure that all students have a fair opportunity for a quality education," said Senator Michael Bishop. "By providing vital resources early, the program helps students become more productive members of society and live happier lives. The investment we make in students today will reward us with strong leaders tomorrow."

The \$4.5 million in regional GEAR UP grants is part of a \$5 million SBC Foundation grant to NCCEP announced in February. GEAR UP projects funded through the grant program were awarded throughout SBC's 13-state operating area, which includes Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin. A full list of local GEAR UP partnerships receiving grants is available at www.edpartnerships.org.

Education is a primary funding area for the SBC Foundation. In 2003, the SBC Foundation provided nearly \$18 million to support education initiatives across the nation. Since 1984, SBC Communications and the SBC Foundation have contributed more than \$1 billion to nonprofit organizations and affiliates across the country.

The **National Council for Community and Education Partnerships** (NCCEP) serves as the national technical assistance provider, annual conference convener and voice in Washington, D.C., for the GEAR UP program. NCCEP, a non-profit organization committed to creating and sustaining K-16 education partnerships, works to increase academic achievement and access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students. By building broad-based partnerships, linking schools and communities, developing new initiatives, supporting proven programs, and using research findings to create successful frameworks for action, NCCEP aims to invigorate the principle of equal educational opportunity for all, and to help improve K-16 education in the United States. One of the primary objectives of NCCEP is to promote academic achievement and encourage education reform in schools, colleges and universities.

The **SBC Foundation** is the charitable giving arm of SBC Communications Inc. The SBC Foundation supports efforts that enrich and strengthen diverse communities nationwide, particularly those with an emphasis on education and technology and those that benefit underserved populations. SBC Foundation-backed programs are designed to increase access to information technologies, broaden technology training and professional skills development, and effectively integrate new technologies to enhance education and economic development. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* and The Foundation Center have consistently ranked the SBC Foundation among the nation's top five corporate foundations. In 2002, the SBC Foundation launched SBC Excelsior, a multimillion dollar competitive grants program that funds nonprofit organizations in their efforts to digitally connect communities.

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Oakland University is a comprehensive, doctoral research-intensive university located in Oakland County, Mich. The University has 114 bachelor's degree programs and 82 graduate degree and certificate programs. Dedicated to delivering a distinctive undergraduate experience that is complemented by the strength of its graduate offerings and research accomplishments, Oakland University is organized into the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Business Administration, Education and Human Services, Engineering and Computer Science, Health Sciences, Nursing and The Honors College. Visit Oakland University on the Web at www.oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, October 5, 2004
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, October 5, 2004
Article Start Date: Tuesday, October 5, 2004