Free Online Career Development Course Now Available to 16 Million Students Nationwide

Microsoft, Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Virtual University offer CareerForward to help students prepare for a 21st-century workplace.

SEATTLE — Dec. 2, 2008 — With financial support and assistance from Microsoft Corp.'s U.S. Partners in Learning, students across the nation now have access to *CareerForward*™, a powerful, free online course covering globalization, career planning, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. *CareerForward* empowers students at any grade level in middle and high school to take charge of their own education, career path and future prosperity. Global education leaders from more than 30 nations are learning how to implement this program in their home countries this week at the School of the Future World Summit in Seattle hosted by Microsoft Corp.

Increasingly, multinational corporations are seeking young people who possess a global perspective and an appreciation that their academic preparation is vital to their future. Students who take the new online CareerForward course will better understand the crucial importance of their education and have the ability to improve their motivation and choices in high school and college. Students, parents and teachers can access the course at http://review.careerforward.org/careerforward.

"This course will help students understand how to thrive in a global economy," said Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm. "It also will teach them to learn online — something they'll need to do throughout their work lives."

Michigan ranks No. 2 in the nation for its online learning policy and practice according to The Center for Digital Education. *CareerForward* first launched in Michigan two years ago when the state became the first in the nation to require online learning as a requirement for high school education. This year alone, 18,000 Michigan students have pledged to complete the course.

"Students and the career choices they make are critical to the talent pipeline and future business prosperity in the U.S.," said Anthony Salcito, general manager of U.S. Public Sector Education at Microsoft. "*CareerForward* encourages the development of a skilled work force, as it helps young citizens explore global opportunities and recognize the importance of technology in jobs of the future."

CareerForward is a media-rich online learning program, developed through a unique public-private partnership between the Michigan Department of Education, *Michigan Virtual University*® and Microsoft. The program helps students wrestle with some of the burning questions about their futures: What am I going to do with my life? What is the world of work like? What will I need to succeed? What's next for me? Using a variety of multimedia, course topics explore these questions and more. Throughout the course, students are asked frequently to reflect on what they're learning, to write their thoughts down as a continual refinement of their thinking, and to discuss their thoughts with other students, either in-person or online.

Students can work with local educators to access the online course, which takes about four to six weeks or approximately 20 hours to complete. The course is designed to be facilitated by a local teacher and can be used independently or as part of an existing face-to-face course in career planning, business or global studies.

"This course helps students realize the crucial importance of education to their future," said Mike Flanagan, Michigan's Superintendent of Public Instruction. "By integrating technology into every student's education, this allows them to experience their education outside of the classroom — in the world of technology. It helps bring relevance to their learning."

"We are excited about the national launch of *CareerForward*," said Jamey Fitzpatrick, president of *Michigan Virtual University*. "This innovative online course is something that every parent in the country will want their son or daughter to experience."

Further information on *CareerForward* is available at http://review.careerforward.org/careerforward. More information about *Michigan Virtual University* is available at http://www.mivu.org. More information about Microsoft U.S. Partners in Learning is available at http://www.microsoft.com/education/pilus.mspx.

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