



FACT SHEET

THE 'POWER OF YOU' PROGRAM

Overview of program

The 'Power of You' is an innovative program that makes the first two years of college available tuition free for spring 2006 graduates of Minneapolis or Saint Paul public high schools (students must also be residents of Minneapolis or Saint Paul). **This bold initiative — the only one of its kind in Minnesota — is designed to significantly increase the post-secondary participation rates of Minneapolis and Saint Paul public high school students, particularly those of color.** The program will launch at Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) and Saint Paul College in fall 2006 and at Metropolitan State University in fall 2007. Century College, Inver Hills Community College and Normandale Community College may participate in 2007. All of the colleges are members of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. This five-year pilot program will provide access to a spectrum of academic programs and career pathways at the partner colleges.

- Through a combination of financial incentives, outreach, and support, the program will demonstrate that it is possible to raise the expectations and the achievement levels of urban students, prepare them for access and success in college, and put them on the path to productive careers and community involvement.
- The program will support as many students as possible based on student need and funds available. It is anticipated that the program will serve a total of 200 students the first year of the program.
- Over \$450,000 has already been secured for the 'Power of You' program through generous gifts from General Mills, St. Paul Traveler's and the Perlman Family Foundation. Approximately three million dollars will be raised from private and government grants to pilot the project for five years. Partner institutions and community organizations will also support the initiative with an additional \$2.8 million.

Key goals of program

The 'Power of You' program will provide a path for more students to help themselves achieve the education that is now essential for a sustainable career in our society. The program was created to:

- Overcome the real and perceived financial barriers to a college education.
- Raise awareness that a college education is essential to earning a living wage.
- Increase the number of Minneapolis and Saint Paul public high school graduates who enroll in college and complete a degree.

Why it was created

Minnesota's fastest growing populations have the lowest high school graduation and postsecondary education participation rates. Students of color are significantly under-represented in Minnesota's colleges and universities. More than 72 percent of the students in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul public school districts are considered students of color (73 percent in Minneapolis and 72 percent in Saint Paul). For example, according to a November 2004 Minnesota Citizen's League report, "*Trouble on the Horizon*", less than half of students of color graduate from high school on time, and only three percent of African American and American Indian students and five percent of Latino students will complete a bachelor's degree before they are 25 years old.

Problem it addresses

Postsecondary education is required for success in today's economic environment and global economy. For the past 100 years, our nation's vision of citizenship, democratic participation, and the good of society fostered an expectation of free public education through the 12th grade.

- The 21st century has ushered in an era of rapidly changing technology and a dramatically changed economy — an era in which higher education is now necessary for a person to prosper. The new “knowledge economy” demands higher skill levels, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and strong communication skills.
- Most careers that will comfortably support a family will require some form of postsecondary education. College graduates earn substantially higher incomes than those with less education.

Research studies on need

- **A new report by Minnesota’s Citizens League, “*The Case for Higher Education*”** points out that the benefits of higher education are not limited to earnings. College graduates live longer, healthier lives than do individuals without a bachelor’s degree. They experience lower unemployment, better working conditions, longer job tenure and more opportunities for professional development and promotion. They can also do more to build their communities.
- **“Mind the Gap” an October 2005 study commissioned by the Itasca Project**, acknowledges the robust economy and social fabric of the Twin Cities, but documents wide disparities in income, home ownership, education and other key indicators. The report concludes the overall health of the region masks stark disparities, which can impact economic competitiveness. A key strategy to help ‘close the gap’ is to make college and job-training more affordable and available.
- **A March 2005 study by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities** showed that many students must overcome large obstacles to earn post-secondary degrees. It concluded that to ensure a well-educated citizenry and workforce, the community should make it easier, not harder for students.

Requirements for eligibility in program

- Graduate from a Minneapolis or Saint Paul public high school in the spring of 2006 and must reside in the cities of Minneapolis or Saint Paul.
- Apply for financial aid (submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid – FAFSA)
- Take required assessment tests or standardized tests and meet admission requirements.
- Enroll in a summer ELL Institute (for English Language Learners only).
- Attend New Student Orientation and register for fall semester 2006 classes.
- Enroll in at least 12 credits per term toward a degree, diploma or certificate.
- Meet satisfactory academic progress requirements each term.
- Participate in ‘Power of You’ activities.

In addition to financial assistance, the program will offer students

- An introductory course to learn classroom success skills.
- Individualized academic advising, tutoring, career development services, personal counseling, and social and cultural activities.
- An opportunity for ELL students to receive additional support through a summer ELL Institute.

Participating institutions

The program is a collaboration of MCTC, Saint Paul College, Metropolitan State University, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools and these community partners:

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| • African American Family Services | • American Red Cross of Saint Paul Area |
| • YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis | • YMCA of Greater Saint Paul |
| • North Point Health and Wellness Center | • Neighborhood House |
| • Hospitality House | • and others |
| • Achieve! Minneapolis | |

To obtain more information or arrange media interviews, contact Barbara Mednick at 651-486-7007.