

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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March 18, 2009

The Honorable Collin Peterson
2159 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Peterson,

Please consider this request for the Center for Rural Entrepreneurial Studies at the University of Minnesota-Crookston. For this Center to be operationalized the University of Minnesota, Crookston is requesting \$500,000.

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurial Studies at the University of Minnesota, Crookston will provide resources for the development of small business and entrepreneurship throughout Northwestern Minnesota. The Center will promote entrepreneurial thinking, support local area entrepreneurs and student driven business opportunities, as well as increasing public familiarity about the position that entrepreneurial activities engender within the economy of Northwestern Minnesota.

Northwestern Minnesota is comprised of 11 counties within the 7th Congressional district that has a population of approximately 150,000. The overall economic synopsis indicates a region of the state that is below average in per capita and household income and has relatively few business operations for job growth. The per capita income in this part of Minnesota (2004) is \$16,100 which is 69% of the state average (\$23,200) while household income is \$37,500 (73% of the state average). There are 4087 non-farm business establishments within this sector of Minnesota, which comprises about 2.7% of all state business operations (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states>). These 11 counties represent 17% of the total land area of the state.

Recently with the economic downturn, several regional employers have laid off substantial numbers of employees. With limited employment opportunities in the region, the risk of losing these workers to metropolitan areas that offers more employment opportunities is of concern. The long term viability of this region of Minnesota requires job creation that is spurred and fostered by entrepreneurial activities and initiatives.

To allow this region of Minnesota to develop business operations that will support economic development the Center for Rural Entrepreneurial Studies is necessary as the catalyst in an effort to synergize the strengths of the University of Minnesota to focus on new business formation and retention. The Center will provide the needed infrastructure support, research capabilities and educational programs to foster entrepreneurial and small business continuity as well as needed policy analysis to support decision makers in an effort to assess economic vibrancy.

Sincerely,



Charles Casey, DVM, Chancellor
University of Minnesota, Crookston

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