

## News Release

# Crookston Selected as Northwest Host Community for Regional Area Health Education Center

By Sara E. Buss, Krista Lemos on Thursday, January 18, 2007

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (Jan. 18, 2007) — Officials at the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center chose Crookston as the host community for the Northwest Minnesota Area Health Education Center (AHEC) network.

AHEC is a federal/state cooperative agreement to educate health professions students in medically underserved areas of the state. Crookston will take leadership in collaborating with other communities in the region to promote existing health programs and to bring community and University interests together to address health-care workforce concerns in the region.

Crookston is located in the heart of Northwest Minnesota's area of most significant health professions workforce shortages. The community demonstrated its linkages with the North Region Health Alliance and University of Minnesota, Crookston as strong areas of opportunity in the development of a regional network to address workforce shortages.

"Northwest Minnesota is facing significant workforce shortages in primary and specialty care medicine, dentistry and nursing. The Northwest Minnesota AHEC will be a vital resource for the region in developing collaborative relationships with the University of Minnesota and other regional partners to address these shortages," said Barbara Brandt, Ph.D., Minnesota AHEC program director and assistant vice president for education at the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center.

While Crookston will serve as the host community, the AHEC, which will be located at RiverView Health in Crookston, will develop relationships with health care facilities and education sites throughout the region to promote and support health-care careers through education and outreach.

"We are extremely pleased to have secured this vital resource that will serve the northwestern region of Minnesota and help address the unique issues facing our communities, including our shortage of health-care professionals," said University of Minnesota Crookston Chancellor Charles H. Casey. "We know rural Minnesota and we know the challenges. Together, we have the resources to work for solutions now and in the years ahead."

RiverView Health President and Chief Executive Officer Debra Boardman said it is critical to have a mechanism in place like the AHEC to work with educational institutions, health care providers and communities in general to bring healthcare professionals back to the area.

"We look forward to bringing an AHEC here to Northwest Minnesota and working collaboratively to promote healthcare as an important, viable employment opportunity," Boardman said.

Now University officials will begin a national search to find an executive director to lead the Northwest Minnesota AHEC. The Northwest AHEC is the fourth such center to be developed. The Southern AHEC is based in Willmar; the Northeast AHEC is based in Hibbing; and, the Central AHEC is based in Fergus Falls.

The Academic Health Center is home to the University of Minnesota's six health professional schools and colleges as well as several health-related centers and institutes. Founded in 1851, the University is one of the oldest and largest land grant institutions in the country. The AHC prepares the new health professionals who improve the health of communities, discover and deliver new treatments and cures, and strengthen the health economy.

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