

## News Release

# Grant Award to U of M Crookston Continues Federal Designation as a U.S. Department of Commerce EDA University Center

By Itolfe on Wednesday, September 28, 2011

For the past three years, the University of Minnesota, Crookston has served as the Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center for the state of Minnesota. That designation will continue with the recent awarding of a grant appropriation of \$615,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Under the guidance of Jack Geller, Ph.D., who serves as director, the EDA Center will work with economic development agencies to focus on two complementary areas: Fostering a climate of entrepreneurship in economically distressed rural communities and increasing digital literacy and technology adoption. Geographic regions in Minnesota each have their own unique regional economy as well as economic challenges and opportunities. The Center will leverage the intellectual resources of the U of M to help distressed rural communities facing these economic and demographic challenges and broaden the tools available to regional economic agencies.



"Economic development has traditionally focused on business recruitment and retention, but more and more we are realizing that the path towards rural economic prosperity also includes creating a climate for entrepreneurship and small business creation. More than ever in rural Minnesota we realize that small business is big business," notes Geller.

The grant also facilitates greater collaboration with University of Minnesota Extension. Geller worked with Dick Senese, associate dean for public engagement and the Extension Center for Community Vitality, to identify Extension programs and applied research that can be tapped to inform decisions in regional economies. Extension has expertise in applied research for communities, especially as it relates to supporting community-driven approaches to economic development.

"When it comes to facing the new economy, local leadership matters - a lot," says Senese. "Extension's Center for Community Vitality is eager to help the EDA Center make University research practical and useful for those local leaders who are ready to grow their economy through business retention and development."

Utilizing the intellectual resources of the University and Extension will allow the Center to continue to provide technical assistance and applied research as well as foster a culture of entrepreneurship and business development across the state.

The Crookston campus will leverage funds to provide strategic investments through cash support and in-kind investments to help increase both opportunities for undergraduate research and internships with an economic development agency. The Center provides the opportunity to utilize the capacity of the U of M, Crookston in partnership with economic development agencies to support job creation, capital investment, business recruitment, and job retention.

"Since 2008 under the direction of Professor Jack Geller, the University of Minnesota, Crookston has served as the EDA University Center with a focus on serving the rural, economically-distressed communities across Minnesota. This new award will greatly enhance our ability to expand the geographic reach of the University Center, help foster a stronger entrepreneurial culture in these communities, and enhance the digital literacy skills of small rural businesses in economically-distressed areas of the state," explains Charles H. Casey, D.V.M., chancellor at the U of M, Crookston.

"This is strongly tied to our mission as a land-grant university; to leverage the skills and talents of our faculty and students to provide technical assistance and conduct applied research to solve real-world problems in rural Minnesota," Casey added.

To learn more about the EDA Center, visit [www.edacenter.org](http://www.edacenter.org) . For more information about Extension, visit [www.extension.umn.edu/community](http://www.extension.umn.edu/community).

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and more than 40 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,450 undergraduates from more than 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

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