

April 8, 2010

**To:** MnSCU faculty in IT-related disciplines  
**From:** Bruce Lindberg, executive director, Advance IT Minnesota  
**RE:** Invitation to enhance collaboration, reputation and innovation

I hope everything is going well for you as we enter the second half of our academic year. I know that the start of the semester requires focus on the day-to-day tasks of teaching and other academic duties, but I'd like to ask for a few minutes of your time to consider the strategic importance of your work: helping Minnesota's regional economy remain competitive in a global economy.

It is well established that a highly educated workforce is the foundation of a vibrant regional economy<sup>i</sup>. And a 2009 analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York<sup>ii</sup> concludes that "the knowledge-based occupation cluster of "information technology" and the specific knowledge areas of telecommunications, and computers and electronics have a positive and statistically significant effect on metropolitan area GDP per capita;" one of only three occupational categories that stand out in regression analysis of over 250 economic regions nationwide. This suggests that your work takes on added importance in terms of contribution to Minnesota's regional economy<sup>iii</sup>, which remains among the top 20 regions in the U.S. in terms of per capita GDP.

But I also know that the importance of your work is matched by the challenge of it! IT-related disciplines are inherently dynamic and become more demanding as the pace of change in technology and the global economy alter expectations of students and their future employers. Keeping up with developments in your field, modifying curriculum and methods, acquiring needed resources, research, and writing leaves little time for strategic pursuits. And our decades-old tradition of institutional autonomy and competition is not always conducive to the type of collegiality and collaboration that might lighten our load and lead to more innovation.

The Center's intention, with your involvement, is to begin building a new model of discipline-based collaboration within MnSCU that we need to sustain world-class education and a globally competitive workforce for Minnesota-based employers. A model that can produce mutually beneficial outcomes including:



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- more satisfying and less stressful professional lives;
- shared resources to improve quality and lower costs;
- enhanced reputation for excellence among all affiliated programs;
- improved learning outcomes and enhanced employability for our students;
- more favorable reputation among public policy makers;
- improved positioning for grant awards.

Advance IT Minnesota is supporting this effort with several new initiatives this year:

1. An IT industry-faculty workshop will take place on April 8-9, 2010 with joint sponsorship from MnSCU's Center for Teaching and Learning;
2. A new RFP process to fund projects that enhance alignment of student learning outcomes with the evolving needs of the IT workplace that will include a formal affiliation status with Advance IT Minnesota;
3. A new "faculty expertise" database will be created and promoted to help fulfill requests for media contacts, industry-based projects, externships, grant participation, RFPs and other opportunities;
4. An online faculty information and idea exchange resource is planned as one of our first capacity-building projects to be included as a paid faculty project.

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<sup>i</sup> In modern macroeconomic growth theory, the concentration of human capital is viewed as the central "engine" of growth (Romer 1990; Lucas 1988). The contribution of human capital to economic growth has been confirmed in a number of cross-country empirical studies (see, e.g., Mankiw, Romer, and Weil 1992; Barro 1991).

<sup>ii</sup> Abel, Jason R. and Gabe, Todd M., "Human Capital and Economic Activity in Urban America", Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Reports, Staff Report no. 332, July 2008

<sup>iii</sup> Actual data is based on the Twin Cities Metro Statistical Area (7-county region)



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