



Bush Foundation

## SUSAN HEEGAARD TO LEAD BUSH FOUNDATION EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT TEAM

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Photo Available**

**(Saint Paul, MN - Jan. 22, 2009)**—Susan Heegaard, the current director of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, will join the Bush Foundation in March 2009 to lead its efforts to increase educational achievement in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

As Vice President and Educational Achievement Team Leader, Heegaard will pursue the Foundation's ambitious goal that by 2018, 50 percent more students in those states (from pre-kindergarten through college) are on track to earn a degree after high school and disparities among diverse student groups are eliminated. The Foundation's key strategy in achieving this goal will be to create 25,000 new and effective teachers over the next decade. The Foundation's emphasis on educational achievement is one of three it announced in 2008 as *Goals for a Decade*.

Heegaard said, "The opportunity to focus on this critical issue is exciting and challenging. By investing in teacher effectiveness, the Bush Foundation has committed to improving not only the lives of individual students and their families but also the economic future of the three states in which those graduates will live, work and contribute to their communities."

During her tenure at the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Heegaard's accomplishments included helping the agency make the transition to cabinet status, developing the state's first higher education accountability report and enabling the agency to share aggregate student data with the Minnesota Department of Education to establish what is called a P-16 student identifier—a common identifying code that follows students from kindergarten through the completion of postsecondary education.

Prior to her leadership of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Heegaard was senior policy advisor to Governor Tim Pawlenty. He said, "Susan has been a very valuable and collaborative member of our education team and will continue to contribute to improving education for Minnesota's youth in her new role at the Bush Foundation."

Bush Foundation President Peter C. Hutchinson said, "We're thrilled that Susan will lead the Foundation's efforts to transform educational outcomes for all students in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota over the next decade. She comes to this complex and formidable charge full of passion for education, backed up with excellent skills and a phenomenal record of accomplishment. Our goal is clear, and we believe her experience will serve the three states well as she leads them and us toward better educational achievement for all students."

Much of Heegaard's career has been spent focused on education issues both at the state and federal levels, including leadership positions in the Minnesota Private College Council and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. During the tenure of Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson in the 1990s, she held various positions related to education, including directing education strategy in the Governor's office and managing intergovernmental affairs at the Minnesota Department of Education. From 1993 to 1994, Heegaard served as Senator David Durenberger's representative to the Labor and Human Resources Committee of the U.S. Senate, where she helped negotiate reauthorization of major Congressional acts affecting K-12 and higher education issues.

Kathy Tunheim, chair of the Bush Foundation's Board of Directors, said, "In putting together the team to implement Goals for a Decade, the Foundation looked for individuals with a proven record of accomplishment. When it comes to our goal of increasing educational achievement, Susan Heegaard is that person. She has done a great job advocating for Minnesota students, and we benefit from her commitment to broaden her focus to include students in the Dakotas as well."

Announced in July 2008, *Goals for a Decade* focuses on achieving ambitious outcomes in three areas:

- **Develop Courageous Leaders and Engage Entire Communities in Solving Problems** – with a goal that by 2018, 75 percent of people in all demographic groups in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota say their community is effective at solving problems and improving their quality of life.
- **Support the Self-Determination of Native Nations** – with a goal that by 2018, all 23 Native nations in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota are exercising self-determination and actively rebuilding the infrastructure of nationhood.
- **Increase Educational Achievement** – with a goal that by 2018, the percentage of students in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, from pre-kindergarten through college who are on track to earn a degree after high school, increases by 50 percent and disparities among diverse student groups are eliminated.

As leader of the Educational Achievement Team, Heegaard will be responsible for achieving the last of these goals. (To learn about the development of this goal and the approach her team will take, see the summary that appears at the end of this release.)

Heegaard holds a BA in political economy from Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs, NY) and a JD from William Mitchell College of Law in Saint Paul, MN. Her volunteer work includes current or past membership on the executive committee of the State Higher Education Executive Officers Organization; on the Citizen's Budget and Finance Advisory Committee of Saint Paul Public Schools; and on the boards of Education Evolving, Serve Minnesota and the Citizens League.

The **Bush Foundation** was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth. The Foundation strives to be a catalyst to shape vibrant communities in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota by investing in courageous *and* effective leadership that significantly strengthens and improves the well-being of people in these three states.

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# SUMMARY

## **Increase Educational Achievement**

(Team to be led by Susan Heegaard)

**Goal:** *By 2018, the percentage of students in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, from pre-kindergarten through college who are on track to earn a degree after high school, increases by 50 percent and disparities among diverse student groups are eliminated.*

### **Why We Chose This Goal**

Research shows that there is a direct connection between education and the vibrancy of communities. We cannot compete in the national or global economy by falling behind in educational achievement.

Currently, only about 25 percent of students in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota earn a degree after high school, and the disparities in educational achievement among students in different ethnic groups and income levels are huge.

Research shows that effective teaching makes a bigger difference in educational success than any other variable. This is true at all stages of education, from pre-kindergarten through college.

Over the next 10 years, half or more of teachers in the three states will retire or leave and need to be replaced. Since the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, who takes their places, how they are trained and what they do to help all students succeed are critically important.

### **Our Approach**

Our approach to achieve this goal is to emphasize and support teacher effectiveness, especially in the next generation of teachers from pre-kindergarten through college. We have three preliminary strategies on which we will focus.

- ***Develop Effectiveness Measures***  
All solutions start with building a good foundation of knowledge, gleaned from data and research. We will support the efforts of researchers who can work with us to convert currently available data into information that can be used to develop strong measures of teacher effectiveness.
- ***Recruit High-Caliber Teachers and Improve Teacher Preparation and Retention***  
We plan to identify and invest in the most promising ideas for recruiting, training, coaching and retaining new teachers.
- ***Improve the Effectiveness of Existing Teachers at All Levels***  
We will champion improved effectiveness as the core of professional development for both new and experienced teachers and other instructional staff.

### **Partnerships**

We expect to reach out to:

- State agencies and education researchers to develop new tools to analyze existing data to measure effectiveness.
- School districts and higher education institutions to identify top-caliber candidates for future teaching roles.
- Existing early care providers, school districts and colleges to make improved effectiveness the core of professional development for teachers.

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