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CONTACTS: Patrick Gasper, DPI Communications Officer  
(608) 266-3559 / [patrick.gasper@dpi.state.wi.us](mailto:patrick.gasper@dpi.state.wi.us)

Morna Foy, WTCS Executive Assistant  
(608) 266-2449 / [morna.foy@wtcsystem.edu](mailto:morna.foy@wtcsystem.edu)

## Wisconsin to work for equity in participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

*State accepted into first year of national STEM Equity Pipeline Project*

MADISON—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Elizabeth Burmaster and Wisconsin Technical College System President Dan Clancy announced that Wisconsin has been accepted as one of the first five states in a national project that will be used to attract more girls, students of color, and students with disabilities to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The national STEM Equity Pipeline Project has been developed by the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Education Foundation, with support from a National Science Foundation grant. In Wisconsin, the project is being managed in partnership by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS).

“Many of Wisconsin’s fastest-growing industries and highest-demand jobs are STEM-related,” said Clancy. “These fields are indispensable as Wisconsin strives to transition into a knowledge-based economy.”

“We cannot afford to allow barriers related to gender, economic level, or racial and ethnic background to prevent any student from pursuing STEM studies or careers,” said Burmaster. “This project will help us increase the diversity of students participating in the STEM areas of study.”

National STEM Equity Pipeline Project directors say many girls are still turned off from STEM careers by stereotypes that boys are more suited to those fields. Wisconsin has also seen disparities in

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STEM participation that echo the more general achievement gaps between students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and their peers.

“Because STEM knowledge is so important for success today, working for equity in STEM participation is part of our New Wisconsin Promise to close gaps in achievement,” said Burmaster. “In addition, many strategies for encouraging reluctant students in STEM – techniques like mentoring or having students work in pairs – in fact serve to better engage all students, leading to increased achievement across the board and a better outlook for Wisconsin.”

The DPI and WTCS regularly collaborate to enhance education for Wisconsin students, and Burmaster serves on the WTCS Board. The two agencies are assembling the Wisconsin STEM Equity Pipeline Project team, to be composed of educators from the secondary level and higher education. The group will analyze the performance of different Wisconsin schools and colleges with regard to equity in STEM fields and will identify, test, and implement solutions to increase participation of groups currently underrepresented in STEM education.

“Recently, the National Science Board reported that American pre-eminence in science and technology is threatened by growth in the rest of the world, particularly Asia,” said Clancy. “Wisconsin is proud that our PK-12 schools and technical colleges will lead efforts to use STEM projects to break down access barriers and help ensure U.S. status as a nation of science and technology innovation.”

The criteria for selecting states to participate in this first year of the project included: the adequacy of the states’ data collection and management systems to implement the process improvement model; geographic distribution; commitment to equity in STEM education as proven by prior performance and activities; and the diversity of systems and administrative structures.

In the first year of the project, five states will participate. Over the following three years, another eight states will be added, for a total of 13. For more information about the STEM Pipeline Project, visit <http://www.stemequitypipeline.org>.

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**NOTE:** This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008\\_99.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_99.pdf). To contact the grantor, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, please call Executive Director Mimi Lufkin at (610) 593-8038 or cell (610) 761-9000.