

Michigan Virtual University
3101 Technology Blvd. Suite G, Lansing, MI 48910

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Contact Dan Keedy
(517) 664-5460

Corporate Partner Supports Students' Online Test Preparation Needs

January 25, 2008 – Michigan high school students will benefit as a result of unexpected support from a corporate partner. Since 2001, the *Michigan Virtual University*[®] (*MVU*[®]) has provided no-cost test preparation materials for the state assessment examinations, the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and its predecessor the MEAP, and, to date, has served over 150,000 students.

Last year, *MVU* provided all Michigan high schools with no-cost access to the online MME preparation tools for students. The MME, the state assessment administered to all students enrolled in Grade 11 in March of each year, includes the ACT[®] College Entrance Examination and the Michigan assessments in mathematics, science, social studies and persuasive writing. This service was provided by the *Michigan Virtual School*[™] (*MVS*[™]) through a contract with Xap Corporation's Bridges Transitions Inc. (Bridges), a third-party provider. Unfortunately, funding support for this online service was eliminated in the 2007-08 State School Aid Act.

"Because of the funding cut, we believed this important service would not be made available to Michigan high school students this year," said Jamey Fitzpatrick, President and CEO of *MVU*.

However, Bridges has committed to continue offering the online test preparation tools at no cost to Michigan schools or *MVU* until March 31, 2008, so that this year's students will not be impacted in preparing for this March's MME. Schools are encouraged to promote the use of this free tool to their students.

"We are extremely appreciative of this generous offer to help Michigan schools and students, especially during this difficult economic time here in Michigan," Fitzpatrick said.

More than four out of every 10 public high schools in Michigan — including some of the state's traditionally highest-performing schools — fail to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind law, mostly because of students' disappointing performance on the new MME. In all, 43% — 489 out of 1,149 traditional high schools, charter schools and alternative schools — have been identified for improvement.

"The fulfillment of all Michigan students' education and career dreams is paramount to helping create a long-term solution to the state's current economic challenges. We are making this contribution to ensure that not one child in the state suffers or is left behind because of this interruption in funding," said J. Michael Thompson, CEO of Xap Corporation, the parent company of Bridges Transitions.

MVU officials have requested continued support for this service to the state's policy leaders for the 2009 test period. In addition, as a nonprofit entity, *MVU* continues to pursue corporate and foundation support to help underwrite the cost of this important project. It is estimated that a high school with 750 students would pay approximately \$10,000 to license this powerful set of preparation tools.

Bridges and Xap are the leading providers of comprehensive online education planning, career exploration, and high school/college test prep resources. For more information visit <<http://www.bridges.com/us/home.html>>

Public Act 230 of 2000 authorized implementation of the *MVS*. *MVS* does not grant course credit or award diplomas independently, but works in partnership with local and intermediate school districts which award credit or diplomas. *MVS* operates as the core division of *MVU*, a private, not-for-profit 501(c) (3) corporation created by the State in 1998 to expand the use of learning technologies. *Michigan Virtual University* is governed by a Board of Directors representing business, education leaders and state government. For more information visit <www.mivu.org> and <<http://www.mivhs.org>>