

**Difference-Makers:**

University of Minnesota Alumni Achievement and Impact

University of Minnesota  
"Connecting With Our Alumni" Survey  
Executive Summary  
Sept. 25, 2006

## Overview

In order to fulfill its three-fold commitment to *Research and Discovery*, *Teaching and Learning*, and *Outreach and Public Service*, the University of Minnesota must continuously monitor its impact on the greater good. That impact can be measured by the people the U attracts to Minnesota and the difference those people make in their communities and career fields.

Conducted January through May 2006 in conjunction with the Economic Impact Committee appointed by University president Robert Bruininks, the “Connecting With Our Alumni” survey represents an unprecedented effort by the University of Minnesota to gauge the attitudes and achievements of its alumni in order to develop a clearer view of its current impact and future potential. The survey focused in part on alumni successes, including companies founded, jobs created and revenue generated, as well as awards, patents, public service, volunteerism and philanthropy.

A total of 304,000 alumni were contacted to complete printed or online surveys. Seventeen percent responded, for a total of 51,000 completed surveys. When combined with the results of similar surveys conducted by Carlson School of Management (2005) and the Institute of Technology (2004), a total of 375,000 alumni were contacted, and the 75,000 total responses represent the best record of system-wide alumni achievement the U of M has ever compiled.

The results serve as a clear indicator that the University is a talent magnet. While U of M alumni are hard at work in every state in the nation and on every continent on Earth, 60 percent remain in Minnesota. In addition to more than 18,000 University employees who live and work here, the U attracts a large number of students from outside of the state who remain here to share their time, expertise and earnings with the public.

## Key Findings

Respondents to the three surveys included the founders of approximately 19,000 companies, employing 1.1 million people in all 50 states and 63 countries. The results yielded three findings of critical importance to the University, the state of Minnesota and the general populace:

1. **The U graduates difference-makers** who make positive impacts on their communities.
2. **U alumni mean business**, in terms of creating new companies, jobs and opportunities.
3. **The U attracts talent** that often remains in Minnesota.

The numbers paint a compelling picture of University alumni and the U of M system.

## **Alumni achievement**

The University of Minnesota system recruits students globally and places its graduates across the nation and around the world. And no matter where they settle, University alumni are making a difference. Respondents to the “Connecting With Our Alumni” survey revealed that:

- 78 percent do volunteer work.
- 73 percent donate \$500 or more each year to non-profit or charitable organizations.
- 37 percent have led charity organizations.
- 23 percent have served on for- and non-profit boards.
- 1,154 own patents, including eight who own more than 200 each.
- 1 of every 10 respondents has received a national or international award, including:
  - Academic awards
  - Humanitarian awards
  - Olympic medals
  - Military honors
- 1 in 14 has served in elected office.

## **Economic catalyst**

When the University succeeds in its mission of research, education and service, everyone benefits. Of the 75,000 alumni who responded to surveys during the past three years, 13,645\* have founded companies, providing needed products and services, not to mention new jobs and tax revenue.

According to the company founders surveyed:

- 48 percent have spent the majority of their working lives in Minnesota.
- 60 percent founded companies in Minnesota, providing a half-million jobs to Minnesota workers and generating \$100 billion in revenue.
- 49 percent reported companies in business for more than 10 years, with another 10 percent in the eight- to 10-year range.
- 12,145 report companies currently in business.
- Each company employs approximately 60 workers on average.
- These companies generate annual revenues of \$12 million on average.
- The annual revenue generated by all of these companies is estimated at \$230 billion.

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\* Many of the founders have started multiple companies, hence 19,000 companies founded. The average number of companies started per founder is 1.6.

Clearly, U of M alumni make a significant economic impact, especially here in Minnesota. You can see the U's "talent magnet" function at work here, as well: *More than 20 percent of alumni who have founded companies moved from out-of-state to attend the University of Minnesota.*

### **Talent magnet**

A significant number of these alumni settle in Minnesota. In fact, 872 alumni indicate that they:

- Moved to Minnesota to attend the U *and*
- Founded a Minnesota company that is currently still in business *and*
- Chose to remain in Minnesota to live and work.

In a separate study conducted by the University's Office of Institutional Research, the number of U graduates originally from neighboring states who now live and work here is relatively high compared to other states. For example:

- 43 percent of the U's 2002-03 graduates from Wisconsin who earned undergraduate degrees stayed in Minnesota to begin their careers.
- 38 percent of the U's 2002-03 graduates from other states who earned graduate degrees remained in Minnesota to work.

*U of M Office of Institutional Research, August 2006*

According to this study, these numbers are higher than those resulting from similar situations in neighboring states (e.g., the number of Minnesota residents who earn a degree and then settle in Wisconsin), however, U researchers emphasize that the reasons graduates stay in Minnesota have more to do with career opportunities and quality of life than the University itself.

Even so, it's clear that the U of M system is the initial draw for these students, without which they may never have been exposed to the "good life" in Minnesota.

### **Implications**

While a high percentage of alumni settle and work in the Twin Cities metro area, the University has alumni living and working in all 87 Minnesota counties. The U's economic impact, like its physical footprint, is truly statewide (and, increasingly, national or international).

To continue to attract and graduate difference-makers, the U of M system must remain at the forefront of higher education in the region and the world. It must continue to research and develop solutions for the world's big problems, including AIDS and environmental degradation, as well as the small ones, such as how to grow flowers in harsh northern climates. It also must continue to offer a broad range of programs and degrees targeting students of diverse backgrounds, ages, interests and abilities.

With dedication, innovation and support, students and faculty will continue to come to Minnesota. All University stakeholders must facilitate the U of M's mission, both in terms of support for the U of M system and maintenance of Minnesota's status as a great state in which to work and live.