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The University of Dayton

News Release

UD ENTERS INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH DAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, ESTABLISHES SATELLITE LEARNING CENTER FOR "AT-RISK" YOUTH

DAYTON, Ohio, August 31, 1988--The University of Dayton's School of Education has entered into a partnership with Dayton Public Schools in an effort to combat an estimated 10 percent annual dropout rate within the city's public high schools.

On Tuesday, Sept. 6, UD will open a satellite learning center on campus to prepare 20 "at risk" middle school students--those most in danger of dropping out--to pass the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) examination and enter either the job market or college.

UD is one of three local universities participating in the University Prep Program (UPP), a two-year endeavor administered by Dayton Public Schools and financed through a $500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program.

Wright State University plans to set up a site downtown at its Kettering Center, and Central State University will establish a center at the Roosevelt Center, according to Barbara Auer, assistant to the deputy superintendent and co-project director. UD, which has established a center in the basement of the Jesse Philips Center, is the only university using on-campus facilities for the pilot program. The students are seventh and eighth graders 16 years old or older. Drawn from the city's seven middle schools, they will travel to campus on RTA buses.

"The University Prep Program is an alternative education plan for discouraged and defeated learners," said Auer, who also coordinates the school system's $10 million New Futures Initiative project. "There is no other program quite like this in any school system in the country because there are no credits, no grades. Without the intervention of this program, these kids would probably have dropped out."
Each satellite learning center is set up for 20 students, two teachers from Dayton Public Schools, student teachers, pre-service teachers, one case manager and a mentor from the community, according to Auer. In addition, students will receive weekly counseling from graduate students in Wright State University's School of Psychology and tutoring from students from the three universities, she said.

"UD's undergraduate elementary and secondary education students will be intimately involved in helping the students learn in a new environment," said Peg Leahy, an assistant professor of teacher education who is serving as a liaison from UD's School of Education. "We hope a mentor relationship will develop. We want the students to become overwhelmed by the fact that people care about what they're doing."

According to the UPP grant proposal, the purpose of the enrichment program is to "redefine 'school' in new ways" by providing an environment that encourages students most in danger of dropping out to become "encouraged and successful learners." At the end of the first year, students will either enter a traditional high school setting, continue in UPP for another year, or pass the GED examination and enter the job force or college.

That approach is a positive one, according to UD President Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M. "This is an innovative program," he said. "If we're going to solve the at-risk problem in our urban school systems, then we need more people like Ellis Joseph (dean of UD's School of Education) who are willing to look at the problem creatively."

Joseph sees the program as a way to provide educational support to Dayton's at-risk youth and create an effective training ground for UD's education majors. "Students in the School of Education will receive an urban education experience before graduating," he said. "It's going to benefit our students tremendously."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The University of Dayton is Ohio's largest independent university and the nation's ninth largest Catholic institution of higher learning.