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**Top Twin Cities Companies Unveil Another Minnesota Marketing Innovation:
The BrandLab, a New School to Support Diversity in the Industry**
Local Executives, Teachers, Students Discuss Solutions April 29 at General Mills Headquarters

MINNEAPOLIS (April 29, 2010)— The BrandLab — a first-of-its-kind, education program for high school students that supports workforce diversity in the marketing communications industry — announced today its official launch, made possible by the sponsorship and leadership of General Mills, Land O’Lakes, OLSON, Schwan’s Food Service and Target. More than 20 additional Minnesota-based companies have come on board to support this new school, which pairs the brightest minds in the marketing industry with students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

After nearly three years of testing and refining, The BrandLab has expanded to six high schools throughout the Twin Cities, including South, North and Patrick Henry in Minneapolis; Kennedy in Bloomington; and Arlington in St. Paul. In 2011, the BrandLab will be in 12 classrooms.

The BrandLab, with curriculum based on state academic standards and aligned with existing school classes, gives students the opportunity to write and produce marketing campaigns and take field trips to and job shadow at some of the most reputable corporations, agencies and media organizations. The program is inspiring hundreds of diverse students in Minnesota and will provide 24 marketing communications scholarships and internships in 2010.

“It’s our responsibility to come together as a community to help the next generation of marketers reach their full creative potential,” said CEO John Olson of OLSON and founder of The BrandLab. “We’re proud we’ve been able to create an experiential learning program — born and bred in the Prairie — to provide exciting opportunities for diverse students in Minnesota, and eventually, across the country.”

The BrandLab Founders, Participants Discuss Diversity at “Coming-of-Age” Party

To honor local students, teachers, sponsors and executives behind the cause, discuss solutions and showcase marketing campaigns created by local youth who participate in The BrandLab, General Mills is hosting an event, open to the media. The event will take place on Thurs., April 29, 2010, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the General Mills headquarters (guest entrance) in Golden Valley, Minn.

“I’m thrilled to see Minnesota companies rally around such an important effort that impacts the whole industry,” said Mark Addicks, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of General Mills and The Brand Lab board member. “I’m personally passionate about The BrandLab because I see firsthand the benefit that diversity brings to the creative process. Inspiring a new generation of talented creative professionals from diverse backgrounds is not only good for the community, it’s good for business.”

BrandLab Sponsors

Several Minnesota-based sponsors have committed funds and in-kind donations to The BrandLab, including:

- 3M Foundation.
- AdFed.
- AIGA.
- AgriBank.
- Art Institutes International.
- Babble-On.
- Best Buy Children’s Foundation.
- Carmichael Lynch.
- Colle+McVoy.
- Gabriel deGrood Bendt.
- General Mills.
- Imation.
- Katerapta Studios.
- Ken Jarcho Agency.
- Land O’Lakes.
- Larsen.
- Loring Corners.
- MCAD.
- Medtronic.
- Minnesota Public Radio | American Public Media.
- OLSON.
- Schwan’s Food Service.
- Shout Creative.
- Step-Up.
- Target.
- Tunheim Partners.
- UnitedHealth Group.

To learn more, donate and volunteer, go to www.thebrandlab.org.

About The BrandLab

Created and funded by Minnesota’s top companies, The BrandLab creates opportunities in marketing for students of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. From training high school students on how to create campaigns to field trips, job shadowing, scholarships and internships, The BrandLab offers a first-of-its-kind experience. The program is based on Minnesota academic standards and is aligned with existing school classes in marketing, English/mass communications and media arts.

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