EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The challenge of Minnesota’s health professional shortage
Areas of Minnesota, both rural and urban, have significant shortages of health care providers, especially in primary care. This shortage will only grow larger as the baby boomers grow older, both because they will retire from the health care workforce and they will require more health services themselves.

These maps provide a snapshot of the problem. The bottom line: more than 70 percent of Minnesota counties are considered medically underserved by the federal government.

- 62 percent of counties are underserved by primary care providers
- 47 percent of counties are underserved by dental providers
- 80 percent of counties are underserved by mental health providers
- 21 percent of the state’s public health workforce will retire within 10 years
- Nearly 50 percent of rural pharmacies have vacancies lasting more than 10 months
- Minnesota needs 2,000 additional lab scientists and technicians by 2012 to meet demand
The University rises to the challenge
As the provider of two-thirds of Minnesota’s health professionals, the University is committed to working with communities to find solutions that address provider shortages now and in the future. We are addressing the shortage through increasing enrollment as well as implementing creative programs that encourage students to consider working in underserved areas. Experience tells us that students who are from underserved areas and are educated in Minnesota are more likely to stay. For example, more than 70 percent of state residents who attend the Medical School stay in the state after completing their education. Additionally, our network of Area Health Education Centers continues to grow, supporting many programs that encourage health careers, with locations in Willmar, Hibbing, Fergus Falls, and Crookston.

Adding to the pipeline
Between 2000 and 2007 enrollment has grown to help meet demand:
- 10 percent in both the Medical School and School of Dentistry
- 56 percent in the College of Pharmacy
- 37 percent in the School of Nursing
- 93 percent in the School of Public Health
- 18 percent in the College of Veterinary Medicine

Creative programs show results
- The Rural Physician Associate Program places 30-40 medical students in underserved communities each year. Nearly 600 medical students who completed the program practice in the state, 63 percent of that group practice in rural areas.
- The School of Dentistry opened its 7th community outreach site last month. Last year these sites accounted for 10,000 patient visits, the majority by uninsured or underinsured patients and has placed 33 new dental practitioners in Greater Minnesota in the last 3 years.
- The School of Nursing opened a degree program in Rochester in 2003, graduating 54 new nurses to date, and graduated its first class who received the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. SON is developing a national reputation around advanced practice nursing models which have created new pathways to leadership and teaching careers.
- The College of Pharmacy opened a campus in Duluth with a class size of 50, focusing on recruiting students from rural areas and placing 400 students in rotations in rural areas last year. Members of the first (2007) graduating class are practicing in 16 non-metro areas, for a total of 25 from the class of 2007 practicing in Greater Minnesota.
- Minnesota’s Future Doctors program launched with Mayo Clinic to help prepare students who are underrepresented in the medical field to apply successfully to medical school.
- The School of Public Health has dramatically increased enrollment through online and distance learning, allowing students around the state, nation and internationally, to train in the communities where they live, and where they will likely practice.
- The College of Veterinary Medicine is working to recruit students from rural areas, aiming to increase enrollment in their large animal medicine programs. VetFAST, a program to fast track interested students in the opportunity to complete undergraduate and their professional degrees in seven rather than eight years, has enrolled 12 early admission students for fall 2008.
- The newly created Center for Allied Health Programs is forging new partnerships with educational programs throughout the state to graduate more laboratory workers and occupational therapists. Enrollment will increase to nearly 100 students in Fall 2008.