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The Minnesota Miracle Abandoned?

Summary: Jessica Anderson grew up in a small rural community in Mapleton, Minnesota. So when Greg Thorson, an associate professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, Morris, approached her about co-authoring a research paper that investigates funding in rural schools. Anderson jumped at the chance.

(January 22, 2007)-Jessica Anderson grew up in a small rural community in Mapleton, Minnesota. So when Greg Thorson, an associate professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, Morris, approached her about co-authoring a research paper that investigates funding in rural schools. Anderson jumped at the chance. "I am interested in issues impacting small, out-state school districts," explained Anderson.

"The Minnesota Miracle Abandoned? Changes in Minnesota School Funding," was published in the September issue of the Rural Minnesota Journal. Thorson and Anderson also presented the paper in November at a conference on rural education issues held by the Center for Rural Policy and Development.

Anderson explained the main purpose of the paper: "It looked at the "Minnesota Miracle," which was a legislative decision to try to place the burden for funding schools onto the state rather than local sources. In recent years, attempts have been made to achieve this, but the way those attempts have been carried out have actually resulted in tax cuts to local property owners but very little increase or even decreases in the funding schools get. This has particularly hurt rural schools who have reverted back to local referendums to fund their schools as a result."

Thorson elaborated: "Changes in Minnesota school funding since 2001 have devastated small, rural schools. The State basically reneged on its pledge to fully fund schools at the state level and instead put into place a program that systematically discriminates against small, rural schools."

The opportunity to expand the body of knowledge in a field by participating in scholarly research or creative activity is a hallmark of superior undergraduate institutions like UMM. Nearly half of all UMM students include collaborative research with faculty in their educational plans.

"Collaborative research between faculty and students has become a defining characteristic here at UMM. Where else can students work side by side with faculty to produce high-quality, publishable research? It is truly an exceptional opportunity available to UMM students," said Thorson.

Students have ample opportunity to be involved in quality research resulting in national presentations and publications every year. Opportunities include local and university funding, competitive stipends and mentorships with faculty. A yearly Undergraduate Research Symposium provides a forum for students from all areas of campus to present original research, art and other scholarly work.

Anderson gained a lot from her undergraduate research opportunity, "I learned a lot about the process of conducting research. I also gained some understanding of how education funding really works in the State of Minnesota."

To read "The Minnesota Miracle Abandoned? Changes in Minnesota School Funding" visit: [Minnesota Miracle](#)

Photo by Crystal Oko '07, Woodbury: Greg Thorson and Jessica Anderson

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