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University Relations

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**Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco will address First Year Seminar opening convocation**

*Summary:*

(August 23, 2005)-The Honorable Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, governor of Louisiana, will be the guest speaker during the opening convocation for the First Year Seminar at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Gov. Blanco will speak at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, in Edson Auditorium of the UMM Student Center. The public is invited to hear the address. She will meet with First Year Seminar students on September 1.

On January 12, 2004, Gov. Blanco became the first woman to serve as governor of Louisiana. In her inaugural address, she outlined her priorities as governor: “We face important challenges in this new century: expanding our economy and creating quality jobs building an effective health care system improving our roads and highways rebuilding our coastline protecting our farmers and ensuring that all our citizens, no matter their age, have superior educational opportunities.”

Before serving in the state’s top office, Gov. Blanco completed two terms as lieutenant governor. As the state’s second-highest official, she supervised the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. First elected lieutenant governor in 1995, she was overwhelmingly re-elected to her second term in 1999, winning 80 percent of the vote.

Gov. Blanco began her career as a public servant in 1984, when she became the first woman ever elected to represent the people of Lafayette in the state Legislature. Five years later she was elected to the Public Service Commission, where she became the first woman to serve as a Commissioner and, later, as the first woman to chair the Commission (1993-94).

Before joining the public sector, Governor Blanco taught at Breaux Bridge High School, a public school in Southwest Louisiana, not far from the community of Coteau, where she was born. She received a B.S. degree in Business Education from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Gov. Blanco is the mother-in-law of Michael Eble, assistant professor of studio art at UMM.

FYS is organized into sections of 15 students each. All FYS students participate in an opening convocation presented by a visiting scholar-in-residence. Students then move on to explore a specific topic that focuses on the theme of FYS, which is human diversity: racial, ethnic, cultural, social, economic, class, gender and sexual orientation. Finally, all the sections participate in a demonstration of what they have learned over the semester by presenting their work through dances, plays, skits, posters, demonstrations, etc., at a common celebration, the FYS Jamboree.

All students who attend UMM full time must take First Year Seminar (FYS) in fall semester their first year. FYS, which provides an introduction to the liberal arts, teaches students to think critically and to assess sources of information, and helps students become aware of the lenses through which they perceive, and recognize that their perceptions are not universal.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.