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Minnesota Students Can Show How Their School Prepares Them for College in the 2011 Race to the Top Commencement Challenge

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A Minnesota school could have President Obama as their 2011 commencement speaker if they were to win the 2011 Race to the Top commencement Challenge.

Minnesota public high school students were invited by the White house to demonstrate how their school prepares them for college and career by going to www.whitehouse.gov/commencement and submitting an application. The winning school will host President Obama as their 2011 commencement speaker.

“There are great things happening in schools throughout Minnesota,” said Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Commissioner of Education. “I encourage students across Minnesota to shine a light on how Minnesota schools are helping them reach their full potential.”

In a news release issued today, President Obama outlined the 2011 Race to the Top Commencement Challenge. “I’m looking for the school that’s doing the best job of preparing students for college and careers,” said President Obama. “The winning school will understand that their number one priority is making sure that our kids are learning what they need to succeed in this 21st century economy.”

“Success happens in schools across the country every day,” said Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “The Commencement Challenge is an extraordinary opportunity for students to share their school’s story and be rewarded for their commitment to preparing for college and careers.”

In a video launching the challenge, Simon Boehme, the salutatorian from last year’s winning school - Kalamazoo Central High - and current freshman at the University of Michigan, came to the White House to discuss the Commencement Challenge with President Obama.

The application includes essay questions and statistical information that illustrate how schools are promoting college and career readiness for all students while establishing a culture of student success and academic excellence. Applications must be submitted by Friday, February 25th at 11:59 pm EST. More information, including the launch video, can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/commencement.

Last year, President Obama launched the first ever Race to the Top Commencement Challenge and encouraged public high schools across the country to show how they promote college attainment and career readiness. Over 1000 schools applied and more than 170,000 people weighed in on short videos and essays from the six finalists. President Obama selected the national winner from the three high schools with the highest average ratings (see 2010 finalists [HERE](#)). This year, the President has renewed the challenge, calling on high schools to share effective strategies on how they are preparing their students to win the future and achieve the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

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