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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

South St. Paul students to earn A.A. degrees from Inver Hills while in high school

INVER GROVE HEIGHTS AND SOUTH ST. PAUL – Students in South St. Paul now can graduate from high school with an associate degree from Inver Hills Community College without ever stepping foot on a college campus or paying for a college class.

Inver Hills and South St. Paul Public Schools finalized the details of an agreement July 31 that allows students pursuing South St. Paul Secondary's International Baccalaureate Diploma Program to earn credits at both institutions simultaneously. For South St. Paul students, this means they have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, an IB Diploma and an Associate in Arts degree by the end of their senior year of high school.

"With rising college tuition costs throughout the nation, I am pleased that our partnership will provide both academic and financial benefits to students who attend South St. Paul Public Schools," district Superintendent Dave Webb said.

Inver Hills expects to award associate degrees to 30 students each year through the partner program, which is available at no cost to the student. An informational meeting for parents and students is scheduled for 3 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 8, at South St. Paul Secondary, 700 N. Second St., South St. Paul.

"The school district reached out to us and expressed a desire for this type of a program for its students, and we believe we're providing a strong community service in following through," Doug Binsfeld, dean of humanities and fine arts at Inver Hills and coordinator of the college's program, said. "We see the value in what they're doing and how they're doing it, and we're glad to be their partner of choice in this endeavor."

The South St. Paul district has a long-standing reputation offering IB programs, having been the first district in the state to offer the organization's full K-12 programming. At the high school level, the Diploma Program is a challenging course of studies that requires students to take exams at the end of each course that are externally assessed by IB examiners from around the world. In addition to testing in each of six study areas – language, individuals and societies, mathematics and computer science, the arts, experimental sciences and second language – IB Diploma candidates must take a Theory of Knowledge course, write a 4,000-word research essay and complete a community service program.

"International Baccalaureate has a rigorous curriculum that is closely aligned with college curriculum and the higher-order thinking that we expect from our college students," Binsfeld said. "We've simply

taken the IB diploma and found ways we can articulate it directly into our coursework using methods we already have in place. We have complete confidence in the integrity of the program.”

Though the courses are taught by high school teachers with IB training, Inver Hills faculty will supervise the curriculum, evaluating each course to ensure it meets college standards.

The Inver Hills program differs from other programs that award college credit to high school students – such as College in the Schools (CIS), Advanced Placement (AP) and Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) – in that it offers a well-articulated program better than CIS and AP, and students don’t actually attend college classes like they do in PSEO.

South St. Paul students enter the IB Diploma program after completing the IB Middle Years program, which prepares them for the academic demands of the diploma program. Interested students from other districts are able to enroll as part of the state’s open enrollment policy.

“South St. Paul Secondary is so proud to partner with Inver Hills to provide our students with this unprecedented opportunity,” Principal H. Butch Moening said.

The arrangement is in line with the efforts of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Chancellor Steven Rosenstone, who has made public his goal to provide more opportunities for students to take college-level classes in high school settings.

“We take Dr. Rosenstone’s call to action very seriously. We have made it a priority in the communities we serve to better prepare students for college,” Inver Hills President Tim Wynes said. “This program is yet another way for us to accomplish that goal.”

In addition to this program, Inver Hills is working to prepare high school students in Apple Valley, Burnsville, Rosemount and Inver Grove Heights for college through its Leading and Developing Readiness (LADR) program, which targets students in the “academic middle” who earn average grades. The college also offers concurrent enrollment options and PSEO.

About Inver Hills

Founded in 1970, Inver Hills Community College is a comprehensive college committed to continuously improving student understanding and capabilities that help students lead purposeful lives, contribute to a vital social and economic community, and pursue lifelong learning. A member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, the college offers more than 20 degree options, including liberal education courses and career-related degrees in leading occupational areas. For more information, visit www.inverhills.edu.

About South St. Paul Public Schools

South St. Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) has been offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program at the high school since 1986. In 2009, SSPPS became Minnesota's first K-12 IB World Schools District after successfully being authorized in the IB Middle Years Program, serving all students in grades 7-10, and the Primary Years Program, which serves all students in grades K-6. South St. Paul's IB program encourages students to be active learners, well-rounded individuals and engaged community members. For more information on South St. Paul Public Schools, call (651) 457-9400 or visit www.sspps.org.