Governor Tim Pawlenty  
Remarks, January 25, 2006 – Rochester, Minnesota  
Kahler Hotel  
Accepts the report from the Rochester Higher Education Development Committee  
(Not verbatim)

It is an honor to be back in Rochester.

I’m delighted that you are here for this very historic and important announcement, not just for Rochester but for Southeastern Minnesota and all of Minnesota, and that is the formal definition and launch of the next step for higher education in this great community. I want to start by thanking the members (of the committee) here on stage and others who couldn’t be with us this morning. They have spent hours and hours of time thinking about this issue, thinking about this opportunity, reconciling different perspectives, hearing different perspectives, and then weaving that into a report and proposal that I think is a fine piece of work. I want to single out the chair, Marilyn Stewart, for her diligence and perseverance in riding herd over the process…She has not only been a strong leader and convener, but she has also had a very deft touch in bringing together the concerns and weaving them into a tremendous report.

(The committee) had 16 meetings over five and a half months, and they always began their meetings at 7 a.m. One person who wasn’t mentioned, who I know provided a lot of support on an ad hoc basis, was our Commissioner of Finance, Peggy Ingison. She plays a critical role, in all things dealing with the money part of this, so we thank her for her presence here today.
Dr. Robert Hoffman, who is the chair of the MnSCU Board, who couldn’t be here this morning, was on this committee and served as an active and constructively as a leader. We are grateful for him and his support. I’m really pleased to see that Chancellor McCormick from the MnSCU system supports the report as well. We are grateful for MnSCU’s role. I know they have sensitivity and concerns about how this proposal and its implementation fits into the larger picture for higher education and with MnSCU. We will talk about that in just a minute, but the fact that they not only participated, but were constructive, means a lot…So I want to say thank you.

I also want to say thank you to Winona State University and Rochester Community and Technical College. These institutions also have had similar concerns as MnSCU did broadly. And again I just want to repeat what I’ve said in Winona and I’ll say over and over again, and I hope all of us will join each other in confirming that the proposal here today needs to be, and will be, a win, win, win situation. It’s not about this proposal versus the (Rochester Community and) technical college or this proposal versus the University in Winona, which is an outstanding institution. This can be, and should be, a mutual leveraging of strengths and growth potential so that all can benefit. So we bring this proposition and opportunity to Rochester to help Rochester for all the reasons we’ve discussed, but not to the detriment of Winona or the Rochester (community and) Technical College. That’s important. And again, I think this report is crafted to be sensitive to that and also integrate those concerns and opportunities in a very wonderful first step. So again, for all those reasons, I am very pleased to receive the report.
I am also pleased that the committee, unlike so many study committees, (was bold). You know, we often have these task forces and things, and we get all the stakeholders together and it becomes the report of lowest common denominator. It becomes decision by consensus and, of course, the only thing you can get disparate stakeholders to agree upon is some watered-down, beyond recognizable pabble in so many instances.

I hear this group was bold, and they were specific, and they got a very clear outline, a very clear plan, very clear recommendations. And so, in addition to your work, thank you for your boldness and thank you for putting a marker out there to say this is what we stand by. This is what we believe.

I also want to thank the University of Minnesota for their bold participation. I know it’s not easy for President Bruininks and his team to be involved in a discussion where there’s some sensitivity around geography, turf, mission creep and scope. And so to have his bold leadership involvement is remarkable. I want to thank him as well.

So this is just another example of Minnesotans coming together around an opportunity and challenge, and coming together in a civic-minded spirit, for the good of the state and coming up with a great proposal. So, for all of those reasons, I am grateful as Governor and proud of the folks who have done this. Now I would be remiss if I did not also recognize the 47 years of work that Marilyn mentioned in her remarks. There are people in this room who have been working on this proposal for decades. There are probably people who have passed on and been buried, who have worked toward this goal.
Again I’m 45, and, if it’s accurate, this has been on the way since before I was born.

But, we start with the community leaders and legislators here, as advocates and supporters and enthusiasts for this proposal. It doesn’t happen without them, so thank you for your continued interest and involvement, and the support and advocacy in the Legislature….Thank you for your work and for your advocacy and for your leadership.

Now in terms of the report itself, I’m going to read it in full detail for sure. But I had a chance to at least get a summary of it and get a sense of it on the way down a little bit last night and it’s a fine report. And I was here as part of the State of the State in Rochester and I called for the creation of a university in Rochester. I thought it was overdue for all the reasons I’ve been talking about. It is an opportunity to establish a new model, a world-class institution. I like that, benchmark, I like that willingness, that boldness to say this is not going to be the institution of the average or the institution of the un-noteworthy, or the institution of the indistinguishable. There are no magnetic qualities around that. People aren’t going to come from around the nation and around the world to study and to research and to invest and to grow because they can get average experience here. That’s not good enough in a highly competitive global economy. So I like the purposeful choice of words – world-class institution around strategic means and strategic needs. …So that’s a wonderful point of emphasis: A world class institution that leverages the University of Minnesota’s research capability in partnership with industry leaders in Rochester, including IBM, the Mayo Clinic, and others.
At the same time, the committee paid heed to the concern about the need to not overlap, not duplicate, not have redundancy with what’s already been done or what’s already here. We want to make Rochester an important part of the strategic growth, not just of this region, but the whole state. That’s why in 2003 we proposed and the Legislature agreed to fund the University/Mayo research Partnership. We had two world-class institutions coming to the Legislature saying, “we need money for this or that,” and often times there is a fair amount of overlap in what they needed. So we thought, let’s put two big horses together and harness them, and run in the same direction. That way, we can pull the wagon a little faster, with a heavier load.

So getting that seed money for the University of Minnesota research partnership was important, matched by some private money and it’s also been astounding, and the demand and the excitement and the enthusiasm and the momentum and the potential that’s created by that partnership. I hope it makes the hair stand on the back of your neck. It does for me. It’s incredible.

And now we have an opportunity to take that to the next level. So, we proposed, with the help of the Legislature, to fund an additional $15 million to take the next step in that partnership--last year with $5 million more from private sources from Medica--coming in for a total of $21 million.
We also received last year, with the support of the Legislature, the genomics building -- $21.7 million for bonding to house the facility -- for the Mayo/University genomics research center. A couple of weeks ago I was back here in Rochester and proposed that we fund $8 million for the Rochester Bioscience Development Center. Having all these researchers here is really good--great folks-- and we appreciate that, but we also want to leverage that and make sure it gets translated or commercialized as much as possible into the local economy. So look for opportunities to encourage entrepreneurial alignment of scientists and researchers or their investors or their stakeholders to say, now let’s take this innovation, let’s take this intellectual property, let’s take this piece of medical advance and see if we can commercialize it. And getting that into an incubator setting or early-stage setting is an important piece of the continued success and growth. So this Rochester Bioscience Development Center is something I hope the Legislature will pass this year. I know that the Rochester contingent will be there to support it, but now we’ve got to get the rest of the legislators. It’s important piece of the much larger strategic plan that we have for this community.

We also just want to step back and say, if you look at Rochester, and what it means to the whole State, and Olmsted County and Southeastern Minnesota as a unit, we have certain strengths in Minnesota in a changing world that we want to leverage. There’s certain things we’re not going to catch other states on. It doesn’t play to our strengths. But the world is changing dramatically—changing in terms of technology, demographics, and world markets and the effects of globalization. It’s changing for a whole variety of reasons, and our democratic institutions, unfortunately, are not designed
for speed. So we have to find it in our spirit as humans to accelerate the pace here, a little bit, if we’re going to keep up. And one of the strengths Minnesota has, of course, is the health sciences, and within that there are sub-specialties that we have ways of momentum that we can ride. And we would be foolish as a state if we did not harness and leverage the growth potential of Rochester and Southeastern Minnesota in that regard, in a variety of ways. One of those ways is to take the obvious historical assets here and world prominence in the Mayo Clinic, in IBM, and others — the University of Minnesota and MnSCU and RCTC — and say, you know, how can we harness that in a way that’s strategically aligned to our strengths so when you see the proposition that we’re going to add upper-division classes and graduate classes, and areas of nanotechnology, biosciences, the health sciences, and envelop that in the brilliance and world leading status of the Mayo, the U, IBM, MnSCU Technical College, it is a good plan. And it strategically positions us for leveraging growth potential for the future.

The growth potential is amazing. There are 27,000 workers that are estimated to be short in this community, in this region, by the year 2020. That is a huge gap. If we don’t fill it in a strategic way – aligned with the marketplace, mainly the health sciences and these other technological fields – we are going to have missed a huge opportunity. And if you study Minnesota, we have some tremendous current assets. We have some tremendous historical assets, but we also have to see which of those things are going to leverage us for growth in the future.

In the end, we don’t get security without having prosperity. You can have a lot of people working for you who just promote security to get prosperity. In
the end, when all is said and done, if you look at General Motors, if you look at Ford Motor Company, if you look at Franks, if you look at Northwest Airlines, if you look at any of the legacy industries that burden themselves with obligations and could not change with the times, you cannot get security without prosperity. And so programs and mandates and requirements that appear to guarantee security are no guarantee at all without prosperity in the long run. And so we need to be about the business of strategically identifying those things that will increase the likelihood for people to enjoy prosperity, not through artificially-mandated security, but through economic opportunity that is sustainable. And that speaks to the need to have our health science sector, our world-class University of Minnesota, world-class Mayo Clinic, world-class IMB facilities, this community, MnSCU, and the rest thinking about their collective growth potential. Let’s align resources into that direction. That’s exactly what this report is intended do.

So, I’m pleased with it and I’m excited about it. I’m glad that we have the legislators here this morning to receive this as well. Now we can roll up our sleeves and get to work on implementing it. Thank you so much for being here this morning. If there are questions, we’ll be happy to take them.