

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Arrowhead Institute of Technology

The Iron Range Higher Education Committee and Northeast Higher Education District today announced the formation of the Arrowhead Institute of Technology (AIT). The AIT is a partnership of education, industry and government that will launch a series of new science and technology educational programs at Northeast Higher Education District colleges this fall.

With more than \$6 billion in mining, steel production and energy generation projects underway and planned in northeastern Minnesota, AIT programs are aimed at meeting the needs of employers and workers and sustaining the next generation of business innovation.

“The AIT is a comprehensive talent development strategy for the region that provides a road map for the future of education on the Iron Range,” said Sue Collins, Northeast Higher Education District president. “AIT programs will offer learners a continuum of post secondary, upper division and graduate technical education opportunities that provide the essential training required for jobs at regional enterprises.”

A comprehensive plan, undertaken by the Iron Range Higher Education Committee, identified educational gaps between the needs of regional businesses and learner-workers. The study underscored a need to increase mining and production systems training, articulation of skill training across education levels, skills training connected to emerging business models, emphasis on “core skills,” and a need to match technology skill funding with educational needs.

Five AIT programs are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010 and 2011: Industrial Technology, Process Automation, Industrial Lab Technician, Industrial Construction and Information Management. Two additional programs, a bachelor’s engineering program and a Masters of Engineering program, were developed for the Institute in 2009, under the umbrella of the Iron Range Engineering program.

Programs will be based at Northeast Higher Education Institutions in Ely, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, International Falls and Virginia, in collaboration or potential partnership with four-year colleges in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Alabama, Georgia, Massachusetts, Australia, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

As a regional educational and workforce development strategy, the AIT allows nearly 1,500 students in 17 northeastern Minnesota school districts already enrolled in K-12 Applied Learning Institute [www.alimn.org](http://www.alimn.org) technology-based programs to build upon high school graduation “ladder into” AIT programming. Beyond regional students, AIT programs will look to state and national markets to draw interested learners who wish to participate in this innovative and integrated learning model.

The implementation of a regional workforce development strategy is key to northeastern Minnesota's economic future, said Iron Range Resources Commissioner Sandy Layman and member of the Iron Range Higher Education committee.

"The retention and education of a talented, highly-skilled workforce is critical to attracting new investment to northeastern Minnesota," said Layman. "The increased emphasis on science and technology will promote creative minds and innovative thinking across the region. This unique partnership between education, industry and the government generates significant long-term benefits to our region's students, businesses and economy by developing a wealth of human resources."

Northeast Higher Education District colleges that will offer the initial five AIT programs are: Itasca Community College, Hibbing Community College, Mesabi Range Technical and Community College, Vermilion Community College and Rainy River Community College.

The Iron Range Higher Education Committee makes recommendations on AIT programs to the Iron Range Resources commissioner. Iron Range Higher Education Committee programs are funded by a five-cent-per-ton allocation of the Taconite Production Tax. Expenditures from the Iron Range Higher Education Account are recommended by the Iron Range Resources Board to the Iron Range Resources commissioner.

A \$315,000 Iron Range Higher Education Account grant to the Northeast Higher Education District approved by the Iron Range Higher Education Committee funds first-year costs of the five programs.

"These are programs that have been needed for a long time," said State Rep. Tom Rukavina, chair of the Iron Range Higher Education Committee. "My hope is to be able to offer additional programs that are pioneering and creative and to continue be able to use taconite tax dollars to educate our students."