VALPARAISO®
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 27, 2009

The Honorable Richard Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar,

As President of Valparaiso University (VU), I am writing to ask for your support with three vital funding needs for Valparaiso University and Northern Indiana. These key projects will serve to strengthen the scientific advances in Engineering and Nursing and will support the economic health of the region.

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As you may know, VU is a private comprehensive university, and has been named one of the two top regional universities in the Midwest in for the past 16 consecutive years. VU offers 70 fields of study to approximately 4,000 students. Founded in 1859, VU has established an exceptionally strong cohesion of academic programs with a targeted integration of professional and liberal arts programs. A focus on teaching has long been one of VU's hallmarks. It is this commitment to teaching that has produced exceptional hands-on learning opportunities for VU undergraduates, particularly in the fields of Engineering and Nursing.

The need to jumpstart the expansion of Valpo's Solar Energy Research is a top priority. Valpo has created a unique interdisciplinary program for undergraduate and faculty research on solar energy. This program will explore and develop processes capable of producing fuels or valuable commodities from concentrated sunlight. This cutting edge facility would serve as the stimulus for real world, hands-on research involving engineering, physics, and astronomy.

The benefits of a solar furnace for research are vast. This unique program will have significant benefits for university students and faculty, as well as for the State and National economies. Practical benefits include the development of fuels for the transportation sector and for electricity. Solar research at Valpo will significantly expand biomass and energy efficiency research currently taking place in Indiana.

The solar furnace and solar energy research will provide a powerful interactive learning tool to encourage Indiana middle and high school students to study engineering and the physical sciences. This program will also provide resources and data to Masters and Doctoral students from the University of Notre Dame, Purdue University, and else where. A partnership has also been formed with Sandia National Laboratories for the purpose of sharing information and resources.

For the expansion of Solar Energy Research, VU seeks a federal investment of $1,100,000 from the Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Account of the FY 10 Energy and Water Appropriations bill.

As you know, Indiana is facing a critical shortage of highly skilled nurses. The VU College of Nursing is committed to modernizing clinical equipment and technology in order to support the education of greater numbers of nursing students.

Half of VU undergraduate nursing students and nearly 90 percent of VU graduate nursing students are residents of Indiana.

The modernization of equipment and technology for the College of Nursing is vital to meet societal demands for an adequate supply of professional nurses. Expansion of opportunities for hands-on learning are critical to ensure that graduates of the College of Nursing are well-equipped to meet the growing challenges of the increasingly complex health profession. The College of Nursing will acquire state-of-the-art simulation equipment, instructional software, and other essential scientific equipment necessary to expand the opportunities for hands-on educational and clinical training experiences for greater numbers of Valpo nursing students.

For the College of Nursing, VU seeks a federal investment of $1 million from either the HRSA or FIPSE accounts of the FY 10 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill. VU will add a private contribution of $250,000 to reach the total budget of $1,250,000.

Last, VU is seeking a federal investment for the V-Line Transit program. The V-Line is a fast, economic, and environmentally friendly transit system serving the City of Valparaiso and Valparaiso University (VU) students. The V-Line helps connect residents and VU students with businesses and other popular destinations, including the South Shore Line.

The V-Line has four routes with the Brown Route serving the Valpo campus. This Route allows Valpo students to connect with other V-Line Routes and gives students access to the South Shore Line train station. As the majority of VU students do not have cars, the V-Line is integral to their ability to access the City's retail and business districts. The Brown Route has consistently had the highest ridership of the V-Line routes. Ridership on the V-Line, in particular, the Brown Route, continues to grow.

Even as demand for the Brown Route continues to grow, the City is asking VU students to take on a greater financial burden in order to keep the Brown Route running at current service levels.

Due to budget shortfalls, the City is proposing cuts to service on the Brown Route in order to reduce costs to the system. In order to prevent a decrease in services and to increase transit options to the University community, VU, with the strong support of the City, is seeking funding to expand buses and related facilities and operations for the Brown Line. The addition of new buses and related facilities will help the V-Line meet the growing demand for Brown Route services from the University community.

This project will have a direct and significant impact on the economic well-being of the City, as the Brown Route provides access for students to area businesses.

For the V-Line Transit partnership, VU is seeking a federal investment of $654,000 million from the Bus and Bus Facilities Account of the FY10 Transportation, HUD Appropriations bill. Local sources will contribute a private investment of $349,263 towards the balance of the V-Line budget.

I would appreciate your assistance in making these requests a priority on your appropriations funding request list. I have asked Elizabeth Pittman (reachable at 202.912.8623) to follow up. Thank you for your consideration of these important projects.

Sincerely,

Mark Heckler
President