

# **Math, Science Skills Targeted**

## **Area Colleges Seek \$3 Million for Center to Boost Education**

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Rochester-area colleges are seeking \$3 million in federal funds for a center that would push the effort to produce more scientists, engineers and mathematicians and people to teach those subjects.

Calling the shortage a crisis, the colleges submitted a proposal this week to Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., for a Center for Excellence in Math and Science.

"This proposal not only addresses a real challenge for this country and the state ... it also could have an economic impact on this region," said Nazareth College President Daan Braveman, who first suggested the idea of a local math and science hub.

Schumer was receptive, saying he would do "everything I can to bring these federal dollars home to Rochester."

The number of math, science and engineering degrees earned at New York colleges dropped from 9,600 in 1985 to about 6,300 in 2005, according to the state's Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities.

The specter of the United States falling behind other countries in these fields has generated an outpouring of concern. Several Rochester-area school districts are scrutinizing their curricula for possible changes aimed at helping students gain the skills to compete in an increasingly global economy.

Schumer met last month with presidents or representatives of nine area colleges to talk about the issue.

The resulting proposal calls for \$1 million a year over the next three years to create, staff and start the center, which would be established at an area college campus — that has not yet been determined.

The center's mission would include:

- Providing a better understanding of what's causing the math and science deficiencies.
- Designing programs to boost the number of students going into the fields.
- Expanding the number of math and science teachers in primary and secondary schools.

- And improving the quality of math and science education at the K-12 and collegiate levels.

The \$1 million a year would cover salary and benefits for the staff, various grants, professional development programs, and national conferences and local events.

The hope is to launch the center in 2007 — or sooner if other money can be found, Braveman said.