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**Microsoft Commits $50 Million in Higher Education Resources, Training and Certifications to Drive Economic Recovery**

*Resources offered in support of UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and ICT.*

**PARIS — July 9, 2009 —** In an effort to help higher education institutions support economic stimulus efforts and work-force development strategies, Microsoft Corp. has committed up to $50 million in higher education resources, training and certifications through the Microsoft Education Alliance Program agreement. As part of the agreement, the company will provide resources and tools for short-term work-force training and higher education enhancements.

The announcement was made at the Education Leaders Forum, a one-day forum jointly organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Microsoft, where more than 150 ministers of education, senior education officials and policy advisors are discussing how governments and universities can take full advantage of e-technology’s potential to address the current knowledge and skills challenges facing higher education.

Earlier this week, Microsoft and UNESCO announced a joint task force to help higher education institutions worldwide meet the growing challenge of supporting economic stimulus efforts and work-force development strategies. The UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and ICT will develop a strategic plan of action to identify how ICT can be used by governments as a catalyst for change. Microsoft’s $50 million commitment is supporting the mission of the new task force and enabling the implementation of critical UNESCO and Microsoft educational resources.

“The innovative application of technology has the potential to impact broad change in higher education in terms of learning, teaching and research,” said Nicholas Burnett, UNESCO assistant director-general for Education. “It is the mandate of the UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and ICT to offer guidance to governments on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education and programs that facilitate increased access and solutions that will scale to address challenges globally.”

Given the current economic crisis, governments are faced with designing and funding enhancements to higher education in order to support and spur economic recovery. With its commitment of resources and tools, available through the Microsoft Education Alliance Program agreement, Microsoft aims to make it easier for governments and the public education sector to bring ICT access and skills to the next generation of students and teachers.

Microsoft will offerup to $50 million in free software and certifications, including the following:

* **Microsoft DreamSpark.** A technology that enables students to download Microsoft developer and design tools at no charge, as well as additional science, technology, engineering, math and design (STEM-D) resources. Since launching in 2007, nearly 2.3 million downloads have been conducted by university students. More than 70 countries have high schools enrolled in DreamSpark programs.
* **Microsoft Live@edu.** A program providing a suite of communication and collaboration tools for students, faculty, staff and alumni in K–12 schools and on college campuses worldwide. With Live@edu, schools gain access to Microsoft Office Outlook Live for e-mail, Microsoft Office Live Workspace to share documents and collaborate, Windows Live Messenger for instant messaging, and Windows Live SkyDrive for 25 GB of online data storage space. Thousands of schools across 86 countries currently use Live@edu to enhance the learning experience.
* **Digital Literacy Curriculum.** An online curriculum that adult learners new to computing can access in 30 languages to gain the basic skills to perform everyday tasks as well as a general awareness of the benefits of computing. To date, the Digital Literacy Curriculum reaches 5.8 million people worldwide.
* **Microsoft IT Academy Program.** A world-class digital literacy and technology curriculum that enables faculty and students to earn industry-recognized professional certifications — one of the most effective means of improving student employability. Nearly three-quarters of IT Academy Program members surveyed report that program resources and benefits improve student employability and earning potential. More than 6,000 academic institutions worldwide are members, reaching more than 360,000 students and 8,000 faculty.
* **Microsoft Students to Business.** A program available in 69 countries that connects businesses with universities to provide students with skills training, industry insight and job placement services. To date, 100,000 students have been trained and 5,000 companies are registered to find students with practical technology skills.
* **Microsoft Certification.** A program available on Microsoft Office applications for IT professionals, developers and technical specialists. Microsoft Certification provides recognized credentials that help students get and keep the skills needed for employment, and that measure and validate the ability to solve real-world problems. More than 2.6 million IT professionals and 2.2 million information workers are certified on technologies used by organizations and individuals.

Additional information about the Microsoft resources available can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/education/ELF09.aspx> and

<http://www.microsoft.com/emea/presscentre/pressreleases/UMTFEdPR_090709.mspx>.

 **About Unlimited Potential**

Microsoft, through its Unlimited Potential vision, is committed to making technology more affordable, relevant and accessible for the 5 billion people around the world who do not yet enjoy its benefits. The company aims to do so by helping to transform education and foster a culture of innovation, and through these means enable better jobs and opportunities. By working with governments, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and industry partners, Microsoft hopes to reach its first major milestone — to reach the next 1 billion people who are not yet realizing the benefits of technology — by 2015.

**About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq “MSFT”) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

**For more information, press only:**

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