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April 24, 2008

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### **Tucson Business and Academic Leaders Gather to Support Stimulus Plan for Economic and Educational Development**

Tucson, AZ – A group of Tucson business and academic leaders gathered today to highlight the benefits of the Stimulus Plan for Economic and Educational Development (SPEED) for Southern Arizona and the momentum the plan is gaining. The plan is a \$1.4 billion investment in state university renovations and new buildings that is expected to create more than 30,000 new jobs in Arizona.

“This plan is essential to ensuring the University of Arizona is equipped to handle student growth and continuing to provide a quality education for students who will soon move into the Arizona workforce,” said Robert Shelton, President, University of Arizona.

The plan for economic and educational development will give a green light to long-needed infrastructure updates and new facilities at Arizona’s three state universities. \$525 million of the plan would cover needed, previously deferred repairs, and the rest would be dedicated to the construction of new facilities at campuses across the state. By 2020, an estimated 260,000 new jobs requiring a degree in higher education will be needed in Arizona. Moreover, another 167,000 current workers with college degrees will be lost to retirement. This drives the need for 30,000 new graduates per year.

“Arizona lags behind the national average of college graduates and the need for our state to catch up is becoming more and more pressing,” said Frances McLane Merryman, Vice President of Wealth Strategies for Northern Trust NA and Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities Inc. Board Member. “This plan is a sound investment at a particularly good time when interest rates are low, projects are well defined, ready to go and are critical to the institutional capacity to meet the growing needs of our state. This is a win-win for the State of Arizona.”

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The plan would create more than 30,000 new jobs across the state. About 14,438 new jobs would be created immediately in the construction industry, including plumbers, electricians and painters. The infrastructure projects that would be funded under the plan would also require architectural, engineering and transportation services and materials that would be purchased from Arizona suppliers. Income gained from these jobs is expected to be pumped back into the local economy and used to buy food, retail items and health care services, creating another estimated 16,600 jobs.

The estimated combined state and local tax revenue from this plan will be \$140 million during the construction phase, while more than \$1.4 billion in household income will accrue to Arizonans. It is also expected to add \$1.9 billion to the State's gross state product, which provides \$89 million of direct increase to the state general fund over fiscal years FY09 to FY12.

"We believe that the proposed plan is a critical investment in our state's future, with the added benefit that it will provide a short-term stimulus to the construction industry," said Ron Shoopman, President of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council. "From the new jobs to the diversification of the economy, the benefits Tucson and the State of Arizona stand to reap from this plan are tremendous."

More than two dozen business, economic development, government, education, non-profit and construction organizations have added their names to a list of supporters of the plan. The plan is expected to become a part of the FY 2009 budget discussions at the State Legislature.

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