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NEWS RELEASE

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UCM Selected as Home for Inaugural Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

WARRENSBURG, MO (April 26, 2010) – The University of Central Missouri has launched a pioneering, post-secondary program on its Warrensburg campus that will serve students in the Kansas City region with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The program, known as THRIVE (Transformation, Health, Responsibility, Independence, Vocation, Education), makes its debut in the fall of 2010.

Funded by a grant of nearly \$500,000 from Kansas City-based non-profit organization EXCEL (Expanding College for Exceptional Learners), THRIVE is designed for this population of students who have finished high school and are working toward full inclusion in the workplace and society. The program will provide participants with enhanced job skills and new-found independence. Because the curriculum for the two-year, residential certificate program will be tailored to the individual needs of these students, some may go on to earn a degree with the proper supports.

UCM submitted a proposal to EXCEL in November 2009 for the development of the program. Joyce Downing, associate dean of UCM's College of Education, was notified in March 2010 of UCM's successful bid to house the program. UCM is the only campus in Missouri and Kansas to offer such a program.

“Our goal is to provide THRIVE students with an opportunity to succeed beyond high school graduation,” Downing said. “The certificate of completion THRIVE students receive at the end of their two years on campus will be an indication of their ability to adapt to new learning and living situations while expanding their academic successes.”

The transition from high school to independent living often is a challenge for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. For these students and their families, obtaining further education to

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enhance independent living opportunities may require specific skills that are not addressed by the traditional higher education environment. Dozens of similar post-secondary programs like THRIVE already exist across the country, many of which are listed in www.thinkcollege.net.

An initial group of 10-12 students will be admitted to the program with the first cohort, followed by a second group in fall 2011. While living on campus, THRIVE participants will live with upper level student mentors and community advisors. Each mentor will be assigned three THRIVE students, assisting them in learning the skills of day-to-day living, such as navigating a college campus, maintaining a daily schedule, and living in the residence hall. THRIVE Director Barbara Mayfield and other project staff will work in conjunction with a cross-section of the UCM community to develop the specialized curriculum and provide instruction.

THRIVE students will participate in a learning community with a seminar and courses taught by project personnel each semester. As individual students develop skills that exceed the basic program, individual learning programs will be developed for them in conjunction with UCM faculty and staff, allowing them to participate in selected integrated course offerings and develop their full potential as independent citizens.

“It was the hard work of many components of the UCM campus community that made this possible,” Mayfield said. “We’ve worked closely with personnel from the College of Education, The College of Health and Human Services, the Department of Academic Enrichment, the Diversity Office, Accessibility Services, University Housing, Student Financial Services, the Counseling Center and Enrollment Management to make this a reality.”

Learn more about THRIVE at www.ucmo.edu/thrive, or by contacting the UCM College of Education at 660-543-4272.

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About EXCEL (Expanding College for Exceptional Learners)

EXCEL is a non-profit organization, founded in 2006 as a grassroots effort by families of children with special needs on both sides of the state line in Kansas and Missouri. Today, the EXCEL Executive and Advisory Boards are staffed with parents, educators, business leaders, government and legislative representatives. The organization’s objectives are to build education opportunities with post-secondary institutions for individuals with intellectual disabilities. For more information, visit www.excelkc.org.