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UNO CPACS Faculty Helps City, OPS and Sherwood Foundation with Middle School Initiative

Omaha - A comprehensive assessment of after-school program needs in the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) district was recently completed by three UNO faculty.

The research was completed by Jerry Deichert, director of the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR); Karen Rolf, an assistant professor in the UNO School of Social Work; and Russell Smith, an associate professor of public administration with CPAR, as part of their work in support of a \$162,000 Middle School Learning Center Initiative research contract with the City of Omaha. The initiative combines resources from the Sherwood Foundation, the City of Omaha, Omaha Public Schools and the federal government.

"We worked with the Mayor's Office and other community representatives on the evaluation grant," Rolf said. "The results will help formulate and craft where after-school programs are most needed in Omaha."

Using information from surveys of community providers, parents and census data—combined with a geographic information system—the UNO team identified four areas within Omaha that were underserved by after-school programs.

"First, we wanted to see if there were existing programs in place and second, if not, to possibly create programs for children and youth," Rolf said.

The Middle School Learning Center Initiative is focusing on underserved areas and is expected to begin offering after-school programs in January 2008. Initial programs are:

- Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands for Morton Magnet Center;
- Camp Fire USA for Norris Middle School;
- Camp Fire USA for Marrs Magnet Center; and
- YMCA for McMillan Magnet Center.

Deichert, Rolf and Smith will be working with the program sites and community-based providers to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of program outcomes.

"Initially, we did it to see where programs are most needed and results indicated middle-school age children," Rolf said. "We will follow up to see how, or if, it is improved."

For more information, contact Rolf at 554.2793 or visit the Web at <http://www.omahaafterschool.org>.