



L&C President Invited to USDA Signing Ceremony

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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark President Dale Chapman was one of only two community college presidents from across the nation invited to a special signing ceremony at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development headquarters in Washington, D.C., earlier this month.

Along with Northeast Community College President Michael Chipps, Chapman was chosen from the approximately 1,200 community colleges in the country to witness the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USDA and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) aimed at expanding access to training and higher education for rural citizens and strengthen the rural economy.

The document was signed by AACC President Walter Bumphus and CEO and Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager. The ceremony was witnessed by approximately 15 individuals from the USDA Rural Development, community colleges and AACC.

“The Obama Administration and USDA recognize that an educated and skilled workforce is essential to helping businesses grow and create jobs in rural areas,” Tonsager said. “The Rural Council recognizes that stronger education is vital to better jobs. This MOU is an important step forward to strengthening our rural economy.”

The Memorandum of Understanding encourages increased cooperation between USDA Rural Development and rural community colleges to develop partnerships and work together to strengthen rural economies; will establish working groups to coordinate

Rural Development's financial and technical resources with private sources to better service educational institutions, and develop outreach and technical assistance models for rural educational institutions.

The memo also encourages co-sponsorship of events including conferences, seminars, webinars, and other networking events and joint events to identify and remove potential barriers to resources or services.

The agreement continues the work of USDA Rural Development in assisting rural colleges, students, and rural communities, guests were told. They were also informed that several different USDA programs can provide loans and grants to construct and renovate classrooms and dormitories, purchase transportation vehicles, buy video conference and distance learning equipment, and other projects.

“I was honored to be a part of this landmark event, which I know will prove significant to the Lewis and Clark Community College district, as well as other rural community college districts nationwide,” Chapman said. “A great portion of the Lewis and Clark district is rural and underserved in terms of employment and education, but also by healthcare and other critical services. I am confident that community colleges can play a lead role in delivering these essential services throughout rural parts of this country. I am encouraged to see that leaders in Washington continue to realize the importance of community colleges and the vital role we can play in improving healthcare and the economy.”