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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Vision 20/20 joins iTunes U, offering free course content to transform  
Illinois teaching, learning**

*Free resource will focus on four core content areas & align to state standards*

CHICAGO (August 18, 2015) – Illinois’ leading education group, Vision 20/20, announced today the launch of *Vision 20/20 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center* to help transform Illinois teaching and learning by providing high-quality, digital course content on iTunes U for classroom teachers in the four core content areas of mathematics, science, social studies and English language.

The launch took place at High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Illinois and with the use of technology, was simulcast live in Springfield at the offices of the Illinois Principals Association. State Superintendent Tony Smith joined the event in Springfield while Secretary of Education Dr. Beth Purvis attended at District 214.

The repository, available through iTunes U, is an open education collection of resources accessible to all and will initially focus on grades 9-12. Plans to expand the site for grades K-8 are in the initial development stages. Learning resources including lectures, videos, books, and materials are available for nine high school courses such as Algebra I, Algebra II, Chemistry, Geometry, ELA 9-10, ELA 11-12, Economics, Biology, and Physics and additional courses will be added by early this fall.

Educators from 22 school districts across Illinois began meeting earlier this year to help choose the digital content and curriculum resources teachers, students and families need to meet the state’s Illinois Learning Standards. The collection resources were then vetted by content leaders and curriculum specialists before added to the site.



iTunes U is the world's largest online catalog of free educational content that helps educators create and manage courses, including lectures, assignments, books, quizzes and syllabi, and offers them on the iTunes U app to millions of iOS users around the world. The usefulness of iPads in enhancing teaching and learning and the need for educators to redesign instruction that empowers students, facilitates their understanding, and creates engaging experiences, prompted the Vision 20/20 group to launch this initiative on iTunes U.

“Today’s students are learning in a technology-driven environment and educators need to find new and creative ways to engage our students to increase their desire to learn. Vision 20/20’s 21st Century Learning Center is the kind of tool teachers can utilize to meet those needs,” stated Michael A. Jacoby, Ed.D., Executive Director of the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO).

*Vision 20/20*, a group started by the state’s school administrators, has become a leading voice and source in changing the way education policy is handled in Illinois, beginning in 2014 with the release of a comprehensive policy brief outlining the group’s vision for the future of education in the state. Four areas for prioritization were highlighted in the brief including one pillar entitled *21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*. The policy concept is to expand the definition of student learning, commit to the development of the “whole child,” and invest in policies proven to link all schools to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools.

Jeffrey A. Leathem, an English Language Arts Course Lead from Palatine High School was a lead participant in the development of the content and is certain other educators will benefit from the new site. “Never before has information been so readily available for students and teachers to maximize learning and teaching. The 21st Century Learning Center on iTunes U offers anyone involved in Illinois education instant access to digital learning materials that will help facilitate new types of student-centered--and student-driven--learning experiences that align with new standards in education,” stated Leathem who demonstrated the coursework at the launch. “These resources can help Illinois teachers create a collaborative environment to push education away from the sage-on-the-stage model of instruction to more student-focused learning communities. The best thing about the 21st Century Learning Center is that



it's populated with resources that real Illinois teachers created and curated for use in real Illinois classrooms," said Leathem.

State Superintendent Tony Smith attended the launch in Springfield and talked about the importance of educators working together. "The Vision 20/20 21st Century Learning Center provides cutting edge support to teachers across Illinois as they engage 21st Century Learners. Technology continues to evolve and this allows educators to get updated, content they can use in their classrooms at no cost to their district," said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. "It's great see Illinois educators collaborating to make this type of resource a reality, available for everyone to benefit students," stated Smith.

Members of the Illinois General Assembly also supported the launch by passing two separate bipartisan resolutions applauding the architects of the plan and declaring August 18, 2015 as The Vision 20/20 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Day in the State of Illinois. The efforts were led by State Senator Antonio "Tony" Muñoz (D) 1st District and Assistant Majority Leader, Senator Michael E. Hastings (D) 19th District, and State Representative Lou Lang (D) 16th District and Deputy Majority Leader in the House.

Jacoby agrees and looks to a future of more innovation and achievements to benefit all.

"Our Vision 20/20 team is committed to continuing to promote the priorities of our vision," said Jacoby. "The launch of this iTunes U will be the first of many more initiatives to benefit the educators and over 2 million schoolchildren in Illinois. Collectively, we intend to do all we can to fulfill the promise of public education in Illinois by the year 2020."

For more information, please visit <http://illinoisvision2020.org>

### **About Vision 20/20**

The Vision 20/20 initiative began in November 2012 under Dr. Brent Clark, Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) and then partnered with the Illinois Principals association (IPA), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity (SCSDD), and the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) to unite the education community and develop a long-range blueprint for improving public education in Illinois.



Vision 20/20's policy platform reflects educators from across the state and is representative of opinions from the southern tip of Illinois through the northern Chicago suburbs. This vision is the result of input from over 3,000 key stakeholders, discussions with field experts, and a review of current literature on best practices.

Membership includes the following organizations and leaders:

**Brent Clark, Ph.D.**, Executive Director - Illinois Association of School Administrators

**Jason Leahy**, Executive Director - Illinois Principals Association

**Michael A. Jacoby, Ed.D.**, Executive Director - Illinois Association of School Business Officials

**Patricia Dal Santo**, Past President - Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools

**Roger L. Eddy**, Executive Director - Illinois Association of School Boards

**Creg Williams, Ed.D.**, President - Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity

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