Expanding Minnesota’s Vineyard & Winemaking Industry through Education & Research

PROJECT GOALS
Established a vineyard for research and education at the Central Lakes College Staples Ag and Energy Center for students and local farmers.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS
As a part of the Living Legacy Gardens, approximately eight neighboring community gardening organizations visit each year for tours and short classes. An annual horticulture evening attracts local citizens for informational sessions. Central Lakes College Horticulture students attending from across the state included Viticulture in their training. Staples and area Agriculture and FFA students were able to volunteer and utilize the project in their educations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS
Environmental sustainability has been enhanced by establishing a perennial fruit monoculture with minimal fertilizer and petrochemical demands, plus research on various techniques for frost protection, varietal winter survivability and pest protection. The project planted 32 varieties in four areas close to the Ag Center office and Legacy Garden, with drip and overhead irrigation, and two training systems for evaluation and training.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS
Economic sustainability benefitted with skilled workers able to fill the needs of the growing industry, and entrepreneurs establishing farm wineries with the ability to be vertically integrated i.e.: taking a raw low value perishable crop to a high value stable product. There has been an almost two fold increase in Minnesota wineries in the past four years, from 27 in 2008, to 52 in mid-2012.

COMMUNICATION AND REACH
Partners: Monies for Vineyard materials were acquired from a National Science Foundation Grant as part of the Viticulture and Enology Science and Technology Alliance (VESTA), and the VESTA management team, led by Dr. Stan Howell, advised on implementing the teaching and experimental vineyard. Peter Hemstad, U of M Vineyard Research Scientist, and John Thull, U of M Vineyard Manager advised and donated plant materials, as did independent researchers Tom Plocher, Irv Geary and Mark Hart. Agro-K donated soil analysis and fertilizer.

Toward sustainable and healthy communities: According to the 2011 U of M status and economic contribution report on vineyards and wineries in Minnesota—In 2010, the grape growing and winery industries contributed $59 million in economic activity in Minnesota. Of this, $16.4 million was generated by vineyards, $22.1 million by wineries (triple from 2007), and $20.5 million by winery tourists. The grape growing and winery industries supported 3,250 employees in Minnesota. Employees received $19.7 million in labor payments. There is a need for skilled trained workers and entrepreneurs in this rapidly growing industry.

CRSDP INVESTMENT
$30,000