$2.4 Million from Broad Foundation to Promote Personalized Learning Schools in Cities Across the U.S. Through Regional Competitions

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LOS ANGELES—Educators in at least four major cities across the United States will compete to win funds to redesign or build new schools that personalize instruction for their students through a $2.4 million grant to the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC), The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation announced today.

NGLC will host a competition for cities this spring, modeled in part after the federal Race to the Top education grant program for states. Educators from traditional K-12 district public schools or public charter schools in those cities, along with leaders of innovative non-profit organizations, will then be invited to submit proposals on how to redesign new or existing schools to personalize learning for every student by tailoring individual instruction through the use of technology, better preparing them for success in the 21st century.

“With President Obama’s promise to connect 99 percent of American students to the Internet within five years, creating learning environments that are truly responsive to students and teachers is more possible than ever before,” said Bruce Reed, president of The Broad Foundation. “We thank the administration for creating fertile ground for innovation in public schools, and we are delighted to help encourage innovation in public schools.”

Cities will be chosen to participate in the competitions based on their ability to demonstrate supportive leadership, a high-capacity local organization to direct the work, a supportive policy environment, and innovative educators ready to participate in new or reconfigured schools. In partnership with civic leaders from the selected cities, EDUCAUSE—the nonprofit organization that manages NGLC—will solicit proposals from local educators for preliminary funding to develop projects that reconfigure an existing school or build a financially sustainable new “breakthrough” school. NGLC defines breakthrough schools as those that commit to helping students develop genuine college and career readiness by personalizing learning to match student needs; incorporating mastery-based student progress toward rigorous Common Core-linked learning; enlisting students in managing their own learning, in part through the use of technology; and using financially sustainable models capable of serving a growing number of students over time. Successful applications will also seek to serve a student body that is at least 40 percent low-income.

NGLC and partners from local civic and philanthropic organizations will select at least six proposals from each city to receive planning grants of up to $100,000 each, which will enable applicants to develop a plan to build and operate their schools. Then, the applicants qualify to apply for up to $400,000 in additional funding to help launch their schools. The goal of the competition is to build three new schools or redesign existing ones in each winning city within the next two years.

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The NGLC competitions come at a time when educators are increasingly eager to apply technology in the classroom but find their efforts hampered by a lack of access to the Internet and other interactive devices—particularly today’s video-driven classroom applications that demand significant bandwidth. Less than 20 percent of teachers say their schools have the Internet capacity they need to teach effectively. And while nearly half of all pre-K-12 teachers are already using interactive technologies in the classroom, more than two-thirds of teachers want more technology in their classrooms. That figure is even higher in lower-income communities, where three-quarters of teachers are eager to use more technology.

But even with access to technology and Internet connectivity, many schools still use an antiquated classroom model designed when factory work was the norm for most Americans—dozens of students in a room together, seated in rows facing the teacher, learning the same concept at the same time from a textbook that may be years out of date. The NGLC grants, combined with nationwide efforts to bridge the technology gap in schools, will help educators discover ways to use technology—and as more than just an end in itself. In addition to casting a spotlight on talented and enterprising educators in each city, the competitions will encourage collaboration between teachers, philanthropists and civic leaders who seek to improve education.

“It’s not just about devices and software. Technology can help schools and teachers personalize learning, enabling students to work at their own pace and letting teachers know instantly which of their students need help and on what concept,” said Andy Calkins, the deputy director of NGLC.

The Broad Foundation investment is helping to fund NGLC’s effort to distribute millions of philanthropic dollars to transform schools across the country. The latest investment is in addition to the $1.7 million The Broad Foundation invested in two pilot competitions NGLC launched last fall in Washington, D.C. and Chicago, also funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CityBridge Foundation in Washington, D.C., New Schools for Chicago and the Chicago Public Education Fund. Educators in the pilot cities submitted 34 proposals, which are now being evaluated by local and national reviewers facilitated by the local partners and NGLC. The organizations’ goal is to help create or convert at least three schools in both Washington, D.C. and Chicago by 2015.

Founded by entrepreneur Eli Broad and his wife Edythe, both graduates of Detroit Public Schools, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is a philanthropy that seeks to ensure that every student in an urban public school has the opportunity to succeed. Bringing together top education experts and practitioners, the foundation funds system-wide programs and policies that strengthen public schools by creating environments that allow good teachers to do great work and enable students of all backgrounds to learn and thrive. For more information, please visit www.broadeducation.org.

Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) accelerates educational innovation through applied technology to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the United States. This multi-year program provides investment capital to expand the use of proven and emerging learning technologies, collects and shares evidence of what works, and fosters innovation and adoption of solutions which will dramatically improve the quality of learning in the United States, particularly for low-income students and students of color. NGLC is managed by EDUCAUSE in partnership with the League for Innovation in the Community College, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning. Funding for Wave IV was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (www.nextgenlearning.org)

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