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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: David Racine, 217/206-8417

Local Group Issues Report on Improving Educational Outcomes for Less Advantaged Children

SPRINGFIELD – Community leaders today will release a report, under the title Sangamon Success, calling for actions to help less advantaged children in Sangamon County succeed. The report will be unveiled during the Sangamon Success kickoff event at the Illinois Education Association, 3440 Liberty Drive, in Springfield, starting at 4:30.

The report grew out of a year-long planning process organized by the Sangamon County Continuum of Learning, a local partnership of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Central Illinois, and Center for State Policy and Leadership on the Springfield Campus of the University of Illinois. In 2014, local educational and child development experts were convened in committees focused on different child age groups to review what has been learned from research around the country about what works and what doesn't in closing the achievement gap between less advantaged and more advantaged children. The result is a report consisting of 25 recommendations for greater use of proven programs and more attention to evaluating existing local programs and practices.

“If our community implemented all of the recommendations in the report,” said John Stremsterfer, President of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, “we

could largely eliminate the success gap between less and more advantaged children.”

Some of the recommendations will require additional funding, while others depend on local educators and nonprofit service providers agreeing to work together to improve the supports and service available to less advantaged children. “Since education is one of the priorities of the United Way, the Sangamon Success recommendations are serving as an important guide to us” explained John Kelker, President and Chief Professional Office of the United Way of Central Illinois.

Since not all 25 recommendations can be implemented at once, the Continuum of Learning will focus on nine initial top priorities. These include making more use of effective home visiting services for families of very young children, increasing enrollments of low-income children in high quality preschool and child care, getting more school-age children into effective mentoring programs, and creating more career pathways for less advantaged youth in high school.

To begin implementing the priorities, the Strategic Leadership Council of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce’s Q5 economic development initiative has agreed to provide \$50,000 a year over each of the next two years, with the possibility of a third year of support if adequate progressing is being made. “The Chamber believes that education is one of the keys to continuing to grow and develop our local economy,” said Chris Hembrough, its President and Chief Executive Officer, “so increasing educational opportunity for our less advantaged children has to be an important part of our economic strategy.” The chief responsibility for Sangamon Success implementation lies with the Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois Springfield under the leadership of the Center’s executive director, Dr. David Racine.

For more information contact David Racine at 217/206-8417 or draci2@uis.edu. More information about Sangamon Success can be found on the Continuum of Learning website at www.continuumoflearning.org.

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