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State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION

H. F. No. 545

02/02/2015 Authored by Johnson, C.; Poppe; Persell; Newton; Murphy, M., and others
The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Veterans Affairs Division

A bill for an act

relating to higher education; establishing a veterans-to-agriculture pilot program; appropriating money.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **APPROPRIATION; VETERANS-TO-AGRICULTURE PROGRAM.**

(a) $150,000 in fiscal year 2016 and $600,000 in fiscal year 2017 are appropriated from the general fund to the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for the purpose of establishing a veterans-to-agriculture pilot program. The appropriation for fiscal year 2016 shall be used to establish the pilot program at South Central College, North Mankato campus, and the appropriation for fiscal year 2017 shall be used to support, in equal amounts, up to six program sites statewide, as provided in paragraph (d). No more than two percent of the total appropriation provided by this section may be used for administrative purposes at the system level.

(b) The veterans-to-agriculture pilot program shall be designed to facilitate the entrance of military veterans into careers related to agriculture and food production, processing, and distribution through intensive, four- to eight-week academic training in relevant fields of study, job development programs and outreach to potential employers, and appropriate career-building skills designed to assist returning veterans in entering the civilian workforce. Upon successful completion, a student shall be awarded a certificate of completion or another appropriate academic credit.

(c) The pilot program shall be coordinated by South Central College, North Mankato campus' farm business management program and developed in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Extension, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Minnesota Department of Employment

and Economic Development. The program coordinators are encouraged to involve other interested stakeholders in the development and operation of the program, and may request assistance with applications for grants or other funding from available federal, state, local, and private sources. As necessary, they may also work with other public or private entities to secure temporary housing for enrolled students.

(d) In addition to South Central College, North Mankato campus, the pilot program shall be delivered by up to five additional state colleges. One of the additional colleges must be located in the seven-county metropolitan area, at a campus that has agreed to incorporate the pilot program as part of an urban agriculture program, and the remaining additional colleges must be located outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, at campuses with existing farm business management programs.

(e) No later than December 15, 2017, the program shall report to the committees of the house of representatives and the senate with jurisdiction over issues related to agriculture, veterans affairs, and higher education on program operations, including information on participation rates, new job placements, and any unmet needs.