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Harvard University Screens Gripping New Documentary Exposing American Education

Are U.S. students falling behind others globally? Harvard students respond in a heated debate

(Cambridge, MA – November 6, 2007) Harvard Law School screened a rough cut of the breakthrough documentary film *Two Million Minutes* on Friday, November 2 for a room full of Harvard graduate students from the Law School, the Kennedy School of Government and the School of Education.

The film examines education in the United States as it compares to global standards. Regardless of nationality, once children exit the eighth grade – the clock starts ticking. They have roughly *Two Million Minutes* to build their intellectual foundation and prepare for college and career. Those in attendance at the screening stayed for over two hours to discuss and debate the implications of the explosion of educated talent emanating from India and China – for the US and for US education.

Executive producer Bob Compton – a venture capitalist, entrepreneur and Harvard MBA – teamed up with two former-teachers-turned-filmmakers to produce the documentary. Impressed with the high-caliber students he met at schools in India, Compton was inspired to jump into filmmaking and tell a story on global education and competition. Chad Heeter and Adam Raney – both graduates of UC Berkeley's journalism school with expertise in foreign reporting – traveled to Shanghai, Bangalore and across the U.S., taking cameras into classrooms to bring Compton's vision to the screen.

The documentary, which chronicles the daily lives of six high school students in the U.S., India and China, is Compton's first foray into filmmaking. Journalists Heeter and Raney have reported for print, radio and television – filing stories from Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Twenty months in the making, *Two Million Minutes* highlights the various pressures and priorities of these students and their families, providing insight into the changing nature of competition in the knowledge economy.

The filmmakers have also tapped a world-class panel of experts who elaborate on the differences in education among the countries and discuss implications for America. Among those interviewed are Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor; Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Vivek Paul, former CEO of WiPro technologies of India; Tim Draper, Managing

Director of Silicon Valley venture firm Draper Fisher Jurvetson; Vivien Stewart, Chinese Education Specialist at the Asia Society; Richard Freeman, a Harvard University economist; and Vivek Wadhwa, Executive-in-Residence at Duke University and Wertheim Fellow, Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School.

The film is intended to promote dialogue on education in America. Compton's core view is that while we do have a crisis in American education, it is not from the usual suspects. He says, "The real crisis is that global education standards have risen rapidly, and American students - at all levels - are being passed by."

The Harvard Graduate Education School students, in particular, had strong views on the film. Most argued that the US education system is superior to India and China because it puts less stress on the students and less emphasis on rote learning of math and science. A few in the group, however, seemed open to the notion that we might have something to learn from India and China. One thought bandied about was what if we treated education with as much intensity, investment and passion as we do high school athletics, students might benefit intellectually.

Among those people in education who want and demand change, albeit a minority,, is Shirley Ann Jackson – one of the most respected voices in the film – who authored the report "The Quiet Crisis," which preceded "Rising Above the Gathering Storm."

This screening at Harvard begins a series of private screenings at various locations across the country. Two screenings will take place in November in Indianapolis, and beginning in December screenings will take place in Silicon Valley, New York City, and Washington D.C. For more information on the film, please visit www.2mminutes.com/index.html.

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