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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Students Get the Straight Scoop: “Why Study Math and Science?”**

*Business Education Compact Kicks Off 18<sup>th</sup> Annual National Engineers Month (NEM)*

BEAVERTON, OR—NEM 2012 begins today. With it, the number of K-12 students served will swell beyond 350,000 in the Business Education Compact’s 18 years of program delivery. Throughout February, thousands of students across Oregon and SW Washington will engage with hundreds of volunteer science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) professionals who visit their classrooms. The purpose is twofold. First, give students a glimpse into a vast world of exciting career opportunities. Then inspire them to excel in math and science—the key to those opportunities.

From the White House to Congress, from institutions of education to board rooms, there is a clarion call to “Change the Equation” in STEM education. Shirley Ann Jackson, President Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, articulates the concern: “There is a quiet crisis building in the United States—a crisis that could jeopardize the nation’s pre-eminence and well-being. The crisis has been mounting gradually, but inexorably, over several decades. If permitted to continue unmitigated, it could reverse the global leadership Americans currently enjoy.”

U.S. rankings in international studies validate the concern. Among 65 member countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranks American 15 year-old students 23<sup>rd</sup> in science and 32<sup>nd</sup> in mathematics. And when the quality of math and science education was compared across 142 nations, the World Economic Forum ranked the United States 51.

Clearly education is the leading edge for global competitiveness in the STEM professions. At regional and national levels, the demand is growing. Through National Engineers Month, the BEC is invested in growing a competent cadre of well-educated youth to meet the demand by building awareness of and excitement for STEM careers. In Oregon alone, 109,000 STEM-related jobs will need to be filled by 2018 according to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce.

“Core to our mission is the connection between classroom and workplace—and that mission is especially evident with National Engineers Month,” says Tamra Busch-Johnsen, BEC executive director. “The impact our partner volunteers are making in the classroom is apparent to any observer. Especially satisfying are the stories of students who are inspired to pursue a STEM career after a classroom visitation.”

BEC’s NEM 2012 partners are: Acumed; Biotronik, Inc.; Bonneville Power Administration; Columbia Sportswear Company; Daimler Trucks North America LLC; Electro Scientific Industries, Inc.; FEI; IBM; National Energy Technology Laboratory; Oregon Department of Transportation; Oregon Forest Resources Institute; Oregon State University; Oregon University System/ Engineering and Technology Industry Council; PacifiCorp; Portland General Electric; Portland State University; PPG Industries; Puppet Labs; Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc.; Society for Information Management; TriQuint Semiconductor; Waste Management; Vernier Software & Technology; and Welch Allyn.

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For more information about National Engineers Month or to participate in this and other upcoming Business Education Compact events, visit [www.becpdx.org](http://www.becpdx.org).

**About the Business Education Compact**

For 28 years, the nonprofit BEC has been making learning real by connecting the classroom and workplace through innovative, hands-on experiences. In addition to stimulating interest in science and math for K-12 students through National Engineers Month, the BEC prepares high school and college students for workplace success through in-depth, paid internships. And to ensure that a high school diploma is a meaningful predictor of post-secondary education and work success, the BEC is leading an Oregon statewide initiative to transform K-12 education and dramatically improve student achievement outcomes through proficiency-based teaching and learning.