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COMMUNITY COLLEGES CAN INITIATIVE LAUNCHES COLLEGE MENTORING PROGRAM TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS

December 8, 2008 -- Washington, DC — Practitioners from community colleges across the country will participate in an intensive, fast-track collaborative learning experience through a new college mentoring program announced today. Community colleges will share knowledge and experiences and receive technical assistance and expert advice as they work to develop effective intervention strategies that improve student achievement.

The college mentoring program is a central component of *Community Colleges CAN*, www.communitycollegescan.org (<http://communitycollegescan.org/>), an initiative funded through June 2009 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The initiative, which is administered by JBL Associates, is designed to strengthen the capacity of community colleges to meet students' academic needs and support their success in college and the workforce.

"The college mentoring program will allow participants to benefit from expertise to which they might not otherwise have access," said William Munn, program coordinator and research associate, JBL Associates. "In recent years, many community colleges have developed innovative interventions for improving student access to, preparation for, and persistence in postsecondary education. Mentoring can serve as an effective method to share knowledge and inspire development of successful implementation strategies."

Eighteen community colleges were selected to participate in the college mentoring program. Teams of faculty, staff, and administrators will work collaboratively in six mentoring communities — each with one mentor college, two mentee colleges, and a facilitator with extensive professional experience in the two-year college community. Mentee colleges were selected through a national competition and matched with a mentor college experienced in the implementation of an effective initiative similar to that which the mentee would like to develop.

Each mentoring community focuses on a program area that is important to all community colleges and centers on an initiative successfully implemented at a mentor college. The mentoring communities are: Academic and Student Support Centers, Career Pathways, Developmental Education Learning Communities, Innovations in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), P-20 Educational Partnerships, and Teaching and Learning Centers. For a full list of the mentoring communities and participating colleges as well as descriptions of the colleges' initiatives, visit www.communitycollegescan.org/about/factsheet.cfm (<http://www.communitycollegescan.org/about/factsheet.cfm>).

Through the program's fast-track, collaborative learning experience, the mentoring communities will develop practical strategies that mentee colleges can use to advance their own initiatives. They will focus on critical issues or challenges commonly faced by community colleges, such as

program planning and design, building community partnerships, staff training and professional development, evaluation and assessment, data collection, and funding strategies.

Six issue briefs, each focusing on one of these critical challenges, will be developed in the first half of 2009 to support the learning of the mentoring communities and to share practical strategies broadly within the two-year college community.

“This is a unique learning opportunity for community college leaders who will work together to improve student success,” said Katherine Boswell, director, AED Center for Community College Policy, Academy for Educational Development, and facilitator of the P-20 Educational Partnerships mentoring community. “Faculty and staff from different colleges with similar goals will work in partnership with one another to share experiences, wrestle with common challenges, and take action that will make it possible for more students to achieve their academic goals.”

Community Colleges CAN, [www.communitycollegescan.org](http://communitycollegescan.org) (<http://communitycollegescan.org/>), is a two-year initiative aimed at strengthening the efforts of community colleges to improve student achievement and to help students address the challenges they face in entering and succeeding in college. The initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education, encourages the exchange of ideas and knowledge among college practitioners through the support of collaborative mentoring communities; showcases practices that offer promise for improving academic preparation, participation, and success of students; and disseminates useful and timely information about community college programs and practices to the higher education community

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