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NEWS RELEASE

The Walmart Foundation Launches Partnership to help More Community College Students ‘Achieve their Dream’

Achieving the Dream and the Walmart Foundation team up to get in the classrooms of some of the most innovative community colleges in the country to help improve education outcomes for approximately 100,000 students.

DALLAS, TX (February 29, 2012) – Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit leading the nation’s most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for community college student success, has teamed-up with the Walmart Foundation for a new \$2.5 million partnership to help community college students by increasing staff and faculty engagement.

“Our nation needs a better educated workforce and community colleges are widely recognized as the lynchpin in addressing this challenge,” said Achieving the Dream Senior Vice President Carol Lincoln. “This new partnership with the Walmart Foundation initiates a doubling-down effort by Achieving the Dream and our Leader Colleges to address common reform challenges and ensure that more students persist through school and earn their credential or degree.”

A critical component to this new partnership is a new targeted grant program called, *Walmart PRESS (Persistence, Retention, and Student Success) for Completion*, which is designed to tackle one of the toughest, most common community college reform challenges: engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in student success efforts. Nationwide, while great strides have been made at community colleges for student success, the proportion of faculty (including adjuncts) and student services personnel engaged in the work is modest compared to the total number of faculty and staff at the colleges, leaving many students untouched. Further, the reform work has not yet eliminated silos limiting vital collaboration between academic departments and student services.

“Walmart is committed to addressing the needs of the communities we serve,” said Michelle Gilliard of the Walmart Foundation. “Community Colleges are a pathway for millions of Americans to gain a valuable education and access to career opportunities. Together with

Achieving the Dream, we have set in motion a program that will help ensure more citizens are gaining the valuable education and workforce skills needed to get ahead in the job market.” Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges – those institutions that have met high standards of practice and performance and have earned the Leader College distinction - are in the best position to take on deeper levels of faculty engagement and forge stronger connections among student services and academic and vocational departments. Several Leader Colleges have already demonstrated promising faculty engagement in their overall student success efforts. This program will scale the faculty engagement strategies at up to fifteen of these exemplar colleges, and then leverage the leaders of these institutions as peer coaches to help disseminate and adapt the learnings throughout the entire Achieving the Dream Network. The RFP will go live within the next few weeks and a separate notice will be sent via email directly to participating institutions in the Achieving the Dream Network encouraging them to apply.

Leader College Criteria

Leader Colleges are demonstrating the power of the Achieving the Dream Student-Centered Model of Institutional Improvement. They show us it is possible to raise persistence and graduation rates, close achievement gaps, and change lives. Leader Colleges embody the ultimate goal of Achieving the Dream, and as such, serve as mentors within our community of learners. To be eligible for *Leader College* distinction, colleges must demonstrate commitment to and progress on the four principles: committed leadership, use of evidence to improve programs and services, broad engagement, and systemic institutional improvement. They must also show three years of sustained improvement of student success on at least one of the following measures of performance:

- ✓ Completion of certificates or degrees
- ✓ Term-to-term and year-to-year retention
- ✓ Completion of college-level math and English courses
- ✓ Advancement from developmental to credit-bearing courses
- ✓ Course completion

Additionally, each Leader College has successfully implemented at least one student success intervention or initiative that is advancing student outcomes that are of sufficient scale to benefit a substantial proportion of students. Indeed, these institutions have met high standards of practice and performance and Achieving the Dream expects these colleges to serve as mentors within the Achieving the Dream community of learners. For more information on the Leader Colleges, [click here](#).

The Achieving the Dream Model

Achieving the Dream Institutions commit to the Achieving the Dream Student-Centered Model of Institutional Improvement. Based on four principles, the model frames the overall work of helping more students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Each college approaches the work differently, but Achieving the Dream’s five-step process provides practical guidelines for keeping the focus where it belongs and building momentum over time. Throughout the process, Achieving the Dream Coaches offer customized

support and help each college's core team implement data-informed programs and policies that build long-term, institution-wide commitment to student success.

About Philanthropy at Walmart

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are proud to support initiatives that are helping people live better around the globe. In May 2010, Walmart and its Foundation made a historic pledge of \$2 billion through 2015 to fight hunger in the U.S. The Walmart Foundation also supports education, workforce development, environmental sustainability, and health and wellness initiatives. To learn more, visit www.walmartfoundation.org.

About Achieving the Dream (www.achievingthedream.org)

Achieving the Dream is a national nonprofit that is dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by: 1) guiding evidence-based institutional improvement, 2) leading policy change, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is leading the most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in community college history. With more than 150 community colleges, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams - working throughout 30 states and the District of Columbia - Achieving the Dream helps 3.5 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.

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