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**Foundations work to close higher education gap through associate’s degree-attainment effort**

*-7,000 students were awarded associate’s degrees* *over 15-month initiative-*

INDIANAPOLIS— Six major foundations today announced results from a joint initiative to increase postsecondary attainment by easing the path to completing associate’s degrees. Over its 15-month duration, the program, *Credit When It’s Due,* enabled 7,000 students from 11 states to secure associate’s degrees –helping to reduce the sizable ranks of Americans with some college but no degree.

Across the U.S., many students transfer from community colleges to four-year universities without having completed their associate’s degrees. *Credit When It’s Due* allows those transfer students to lock in their associate’s credentials once they’ve completed the necessary credits –a process known as reverse transfer. The six organizations that fund the initiative include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Helios Education Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation and USA Funds.

Reverse transfer is important because it ensures that community-college transfer students who end up not finishing their bachelor’s degrees emerge from college with some form of postsecondary credential, rather than debt but no degree. Of all students nationally who started at community colleges in 2008, just 16 percent completed a degree at a four-year institution within six years. Addressing this challenge is a key part of increasing the percentage of Americans with an education beyond high school.

“If we’re to advance as a nation, we must ensure that more Americans are equipped for success and productivity in an economy that demands higher education credentials,” said William Moses, Managing Director-Education at The Kresge Foundation. “While increasing bachelor’s attainment should be a key priority, making it more seamless for students to secure their associate’s degrees equips those students with opportunities to thrive in work and in life.”

This is especially true as there’s a growing demand for associate’s degrees on the labor market. Economists project the majority of jobs – 65 percent – will require postsecondary education of some form by 2020, and 30 percent of those jobs will require postsecondary pathways other than a four-year bachelor’s degree, including associate’s degrees. Many of those non-bachelor’s jobs pay livable, middle-class wages.

“The focus on reverse transfer through *Credit When It’s Due* has enabled us to makes strides as a nation in elevating conversations about the value of the associate’s degree,” said Jamie P. Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation. “This effort helps improve students’ ability to land high quality jobs while developing and deploying the talent needed for the 21st Century.”

Through *Credit When It’s Due*, the six foundations provided funding for 495 colleges and universities in 15 states to implement the technology and processes needed to support reverse transfer. The initiative also enabled the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to research best practices in reverse transfer so they can be replicated.

“*Credit When It’s Due* and reverse transfer are shedding light on students who have been invisible within the higher education system,” said Debra D. Bragg, founding director of the University of Illinois’ OCCRL. “Through this work, we’ve learned what it takes to ensure reverse transfer programs are effective so we can maximize their impact for students who can most benefit from them.”

More information about reverse transfer and the *Credit When It’s Due* initiative is available at: <http://occrl.illinois.edu/>

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