



Oregon

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Oregon Student Assistance Commission

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November 30, 2009

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oregon Student Assistance Commission Receives Grant to Expand College Access Program

\$50,000 grant is part of Lumina Foundation for Education grant to expand College Goal SundaySM across the country

Eugene, OR – The Oregon Student Assistance Commission has received a three-year grant for \$50,000 from the YMCA of the USA to continue College Goal Sunday in Oregon, a volunteer-run program that aims to connect youth and families with funding for college. This is part of a \$5.1 million grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to support the integration and expansion of College Goal Sunday across the country.

The College Goal Sunday program brings together financial aid professionals from colleges and universities along with other volunteers to help students from low-income, underserved and nontraditional backgrounds complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Oregon's version of the program is called College Goal Oregon and planned for Saturday, January 30, 2010 at 25 sites across the state, most at community colleges or high schools. The program began in Oregon in 2007 and has served 5300 students and their families.

According to the American Council on Education, a substantial number of students are missing out on needed assistance. College Goal Sunday volunteers implement extensive outreach campaigns to reach these students and families.

“Many of the students who participate in College Goal Sunday are the first in their families to pursue higher education,” said Jamie Merisotis, president and CEO of Lumina Foundation. “College Goal Sunday is designed to take the mystery out of the financial aid application process and help students with the greatest needs understand that a college education is achievable.”

He added that the YMCA's reach and youth development expertise provide an immense opportunity to increase efforts across the country. “Ultimately, the YMCA's management -- and the program's expansion – will allow for more students in more cities and states to receive the assistance they need to complete financial aid applications.”

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College Goal Sunday is currently offered in 39 states and the District of Columbia. Through this program, more than 30,000 students and families completed financial aid in 2008. Oregon’s grant will be used specifically to continue the state’s success in expanding outreach to foster youth, students with disabilities, homeless students, older nontraditional students, and students in isolated rural areas.

“College Goal Sunday can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals in communities all across Oregon” said Lori Ellis, State Coordinator for College Goal Oregon. “We look forward to expanding the program in the year ahead so that YMCA can find new ways to participate and make college a reality for thousands of people.”

ABOUT COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAYSM: The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association in 1989 with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc., and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

ABOUT LUMINA FOUNDATION: Lumina Foundation for Education is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college – especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. The foundation’s goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change.

ABOUT THE YMCA: The nation’s 2,686 YMCAs serve 21 million people each year, including nearly 10 million children under the age of 18. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well-being for all, YMCAs unite men, women and children of ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America’s communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Visit www.ymca.net to find your local YMCA.

ABOUT THE OREGON STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The Oregon Student Assistance Program (OSAC) is a state agency that administers a variety of state, federal, and privately funded scholarships and grants for the benefit of Oregonians attending postsecondary schools. OSAC is unique in the nation for its partnership of administering scholarship programs with more than 400 private donors, foundations, and banks. More information about OSAC is available at www.OSAC.state.or.us and www.GetCollegeFunds.org.