



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jeff Landis, PR Director
617.728.4446 ext. 146 (office)
978.473.6346 (cell)
jlandis@jff.org

***Breaking Through* Community Colleges Receive \$200,000 From the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Scale Up Successes**

Boston, MA (October 28, 2009)—Through the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, five community colleges will share \$200,000 to scale up *Breaking Through*, a national initiative designed to support the educational and workforce advancement of underserved and under-skilled young adult students by helping them prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. The project is a partnership of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education.

The five community colleges selected for the scale-up grants have demonstrated that their *Breaking Through* strategies have improved academic outcomes for students. In addition, the award reflects each institution's success in designing a sustainable model for the *Breaking Through* initiative on their campuses.

"All Americans deserve a chance to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for jobs that can provide family-supporting wages," said Marlene B. Seltzer, president and CEO of Jobs for the Future. "Colleges that scale up strategies like *Breaking Through* will accelerate President Obama's goal of graduating 5 million more Americans from community colleges by 2020. The grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation help expand the pathways for low-skilled young adults to attain college credentials that will pay off in today's labor market as well as over the long term."

With support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, *Breaking Through* began as a research initiative in 2004, identifying barriers that account for the lack of success among low-skilled adult students, as well as recommendations for overcoming those barriers. To build on those research findings, *Breaking Through* entered a three-year national demonstration phase in 2005 that enabled community colleges to implement full pathways to college-level professional/technical programs for low-skilled adults. In 2009, *Breaking Through* entered a new phase that combines documenting best practices at participating community colleges, documenting evidence that those practices make a difference in the lives of students, and scaling up the work in several sites.

The five community colleges that will receive the scale up grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are:

Durham Technical Community College (Durham, North Carolina)

Durham Technical Community College's 5,000 students include a large number of non-traditional students: 72 percent attend part time while 61 percent are over age 25. With its Scale Up grant, Durham Tech will leverage its incentive program—using cash or certificates—to increase student retention and advancement.

Lake Michigan College (Benton Harbor, Michigan)

Lake Michigan College is a 2-year community college offering associate degrees and certificates in more than 100 transfer and career areas of study. The school works closely with the local Workforce Investment Board to prepare TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) participants for employment and postsecondary education. With its grant, Lake Michigan College will scale up its efforts to help underprepared adults complete stackable certificates that can lead to job prospects and degrees.

Owensboro Community & Technical College (Owensboro, Kentucky)

OCTC enrolls nearly 5,500 students with 69 percent attending part time. With Gates Foundation support, OCTC will work in partnership with its Economic Development Corporation and Development Board to scale up efforts that help students work full time while obtaining certifications and degrees.

Pamlico Community College (Grantsboro, North Carolina)

Pamlico enrolls just over 500 students, with 51 percent attending part time; 56 percent are over the age of 24. Pamlico has integrated concepts of *Breaking Through* into its healthcare pathway in both credit and non-credit courses. With its grant, Pamlico will scale up the principles of *Breaking Through* throughout the rest of the college including the creation of an academic success center.

Tacoma Community College (Tacoma, Washington)

Tacoma has 8,000 students, with 46 percent attending part time; 50 percent are over the age of 25 and 17 percent are over the age of 45. For its low-skilled adult students, the college uses a program that combines basic skills with career training and technical coursework (I-BEST). With its grant, TCC will scale up its integration of I-BEST and *Breaking Through* practices.

About Breaking Through

Breaking Through, a multiyear demonstration project, promotes and strengthens the efforts of innovative community colleges across the country to help low-literacy adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. The goal is to strengthen postsecondary outcomes for low-income adults by focusing on strategies that create more effective pathways through pre-college and degree-level programs. *Breaking Through* is supported by grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. For more information, visit www.breakingthroughcc.org.

About Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In over 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. For more information, visit www.jff.org.

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