October 26, 2011

American Association of Community Colleges Statement
on College Board’s 2011 Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid Reports

The College Board’s 2011 Trends in College Pricing and Trends in Student Aid reports on college pricing and student aid underscore two ongoing realities for community college students and institutions. Those realities are continuing tuition increases coupled with a strong and essential federal role in helping students meet their educational expenses.

The Board's data show that, given reductions in state and local funding, many colleges have been left with little recourse but to increase tuition. Fortunately, these increases are relatively small in dollar terms—the average full-time, full-year community college student paid just $236 more in 2011-2012 than in the previous academic year, bringing average tuition and fees to $2,963. However, the low tuition for community colleges meant that they experienced the largest percentage increase of any sector (8.7%).

Over the past decade, state support for public higher education decreased from $7.25 to $6.33 per $1,000 of per capita income. At the same time, community colleges have experienced tremendous enrollment growth and related demands for their services.

Federal student aid remains the lifeline to higher education access for millions of community college students. In 2009-10, close to 3 million community college students received more than $9.7 billion in Pell Grant funds. Community college students are fortunate in that the low tuitions they pay result in a reduced reliance on loans, and they account for 10% or less of all federal loans. Lastly, the increased reliance of all college students on federal tax credits as cited in the College Board report is significant —$14 billion was provided from that source in 2009, up from $7 billion the year before.

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