

TO: Public Affairs Officer
FROM: AACC/ACCT
DATE: January 15, 2010
SUBJECT: Press Release and Instructions for Dissemination

You have received a draft op-ed and letter to state legislators. Attached is a draft press release, also designed to help call attention to your institution's need for increased financial support. The press release text provided can either be used as it is with your institution's specific information added or can be the starting point for a version with your own language.

Once finalized and approved internally your press release should be disseminated to your media list, including local and state capitol print, broadcast and online outlets. Be sure to send the release to relevant bloggers and online columnists as well. The media's preferred method of transmission is electronic, with the text embedded as well as attached as a Word, rather than a PDF document.

Below are tips for increasing the chances of pick-up:

- Send the press release in the morning; avoid Friday or weekend dissemination.
- Follow-up with a phone call or another e-mail at least an hour after sending. If the former, begin by asking the reporter/producer if he/she has time to speak at that moment and if not when would be a good time to talk. Avoid calling when they are facing deadlines, such as end of day.
- Make sure for local outlets you convey why this is relevant to their audiences. Offer spokespeople from your community, including your institution's president, faculty or students who are affected by cutbacks in state funding.
- For your state capitol outlets, broaden the pitch to include all community colleges in the state, while weaving in a local example and spokesperson (such as a student from that city).
- If an influential outlet/reporter has expressed interest in the story, be sure to weave that into your conversation with other reporters/producers since there's nothing like a competitive element.
- Avoid story exclusives since reporters have long memories and you want broad coverage through the legislative session.
- Follow-up in a timely fashion to any questions raised; keep the reporter's/producer's deadlines firmly in mind.
- Express your appreciation for their time. Keep especially helpful reporters/producers in mind going forward and share information down the road that may be beneficial to them.

Post a hyperlink to the favorable print, radio, television coverage you receive on your institution's Web site. Disseminate the link widely to all key audiences, including faculty, staff, students, alum, policymakers, members of the business community, "influencers" and beyond.

Should you have questions about next steps, please contact Norma Kent at nkent@aacc.nche.edu or 202/728-0200, ext. 209, who will be happy to provide additional guidance.

More Students, But Less Funding:
Not a Winning Formula for Economic Recovery Locally or Nationwide

[dateline] The President, [name], and Board of Trustees of [institution's name] call upon the state legislature to properly fund the institution, which has had an X percentage increase in students, but a Y percentage decrease in funding over the past [timeframe].

“Since the start of the current economic crisis, [institution's name] Community College has worked aggressively to accommodate the increased student demand. We've added classes and extended our hours, but without a corresponding increase in funding we cannot sustain the needs of our students,” said [name], President of [institution's name] Community College.

Jobs are key to [name the city's] economic recovery and [institution's name] Community College is helping to prepare our community members for the changing workforce needs, and we offer affordable access to learning for students and families hard pressed by a struggling economy. [Institution's name] Community College and the 1,200 other community colleges across the country enroll almost half of all U.S. undergraduates. The President's Council of Economic Advisors has stated, “In many respects, community colleges are the epicenter of the U.S. post-high school education and training system...they can be nimble allies of employers and other workforce partners in providing customized training that is specific to the needs of a particular employer or industry.”

“So why are we shortchanging students in [city]?” asked President [name]. “Our state's legislators must adequately fund this institution and other community colleges that are dedicated to helping students in need of affordable and timely education and training. Our goal is to prepare individuals for success in the changing economic landscape, but without the necessary funding our students and our community will lack a competitive advantage.”

[Institution's name] Community College and community colleges across the country deliver local economic benefits:

- A community college degree increases personal earnings by an average of \$7,900 annually.
- Community college graduates earn up to 30 percent more than high school graduates.
- State and local governments reap a 16 percent return on every dollar they invest in community colleges due to the increased earnings of community college graduates.
- Community colleges are traditionally the most affordable college option (at [institution's name] the average yearly cost is \$XXXX a year) because state and local appropriations are designed to keep costs per student down.

In addition, community colleges such as [institution's name] provide training in in-demand fields such as nursing, dental hygiene, health information management, firefighting and law enforcement.

[Institution's name] Community College also has partnerships with [name of businesses] so that employees can update their skills and knowledge required to keep key industries growing.

“[Name of company] has had a tremendous partnership with [institution’s name] Community College. We are working together to ensure we have a knowledgeable workforce, which translates into a stable community with a solid economic base. Without [institution’s name] Community College we would simply not be as competitive,” said XXXX, President of XXX.

In 2009, [institution’s name] Community College’s student body grew from X to Y, while state funding [contracted by X or stayed the same]. In 2010, school administrators anticipate an additional X students will seek enrollment. In order to meet this growing demand, the school needs X percentage growth in funding from the state legislature.

“At a time of high unemployment and concern about America’s competitive future, why are we compromising on educational opportunity? Education is a proven gateway to success, so without a [restoration of or an increase in] funding levels for our state’s community colleges, we’re putting our citizens and our state at further risk,” stated President [name].

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[boilerplate on [institution’s name] Community College and Web site address]