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AACC Applauds President Obama’s Recognition of Community Colleges in the State of the Union Address and the America’s College Promise Proposal

Washington, DC – At the State of the Union speech last night, President Obama highlighted America’s College Promise, a far-reaching proposal to eliminate tuition for students in certain community college programs. In his speech, Obama stated that, “Forty percent of our college students choose community college. Some are young and starting out. Some are older and looking for a better job. Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market. Whoever you are, this plan is your chance to graduate ready for the new economy, without a load of debt.”

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) commends the proposal, which is intended to make the first two years of education at a community college as universally available as elementary and secondary education.

“Community college leaders across the country have been galvanized by President Obama’s announcement,” said AACC President and CEO Dr. Walter G. Bumphus. “We fully recognize that there are significant political and policy issues to be fleshed out as Congress deliberates this proposal. However, the bottom line for us is that it would make community college dramatically more accessible, and that is absolutely a good thing for America.”

Bumphus said that the country may ultimately view this Promise proposal as being a watershed in its views about educational attainment. He acknowledged that there are many approaches that could be used to foster greater higher education participation. But he noted the initial popularity of the Tennessee Promise program and the enthusiasm that the president’s proposal has already elicited. Bumpus stated, “We know that our students are worth this additional investment, and we stand by our conviction that the route to universally greater postsecondary participation and success is through community colleges.”

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As the voice of the nation’s community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), delivers educational and economic opportunity for 13 million diverse students in search of the American Dream. Uniquely dedicated to access and success for all students, AACC’s member colleges provide an on-ramp to degree attainment, skilled careers and family-supporting wages. Located in Washington, D.C., AACC advocates for these not-for-profit, public-serving institutions to ensure they have the resources and support they need to deliver on the mission of increasing economic mobility for all.