COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO TRAIN BABY BOOMERS FOR JOBS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE
10,000 Plus 50 adults to earn certificates or degrees in healthcare, education or social service occupations

WASHINGTON – Baby boomers have struggled since 2007 in a job market plagued by record unemployment. Now they can train for meaningful jobs that improve communities and get back to work, thanks to a $3.2 million grant over three years to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) provided by the Deerbrook Charitable Trust.

The grant will build on AACC’s successful Plus 50 Initiative – a program tailored to the needs of adult learners/workers – by expanding the effort to reach 10,000 additional plus 50 students at 100 community colleges. The students will get job training and complete a certificate or degree in healthcare, education or social service professions.

“Baby boomers believe their participation in work and community service matter, even as they age,” said Mary Sue Vickers, director of the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC. “With a continuing economic recession, many boomers need to work well into what would have been their retirement years. But unemployed plus 50 adults often find that their skill sets don’t fit the available jobs. We have a solution: Come back to college, earn a credential or degree in a high-demand field that gives back, and get back to work.”

Since 2008, the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC has focused much of its efforts on training programs to get unemployed older adults back on the job. An independent evaluation of AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative found that 89 percent of students agreed that plus-50 work force training helped them acquire new job skills, and 72 percent attributed landing a job to such training.

The continuing need among older workers and the success of the AACC program have attracted support from leading foundations. Begun through a 3-year grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies that originally involved 13 colleges and then expanded to 11 more, the initiative became more focused in 2010 through funding from Lumina Foundation for the Plus 50 Completion strategy, reflecting a rising emphasis among community colleges to have students earn credentials (degrees and certificates). New funding from the Deerbrook Charitable Trust will be used to triple the number of colleges involved in the Plus 50 Initiative and provide them with resources, funds and expertise needed to build a successful program.

Because the initiative will triple in size, the Plus 50 Initiative will benefit from technical assistance from scaling experts at the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. The initiative also builds on Civic Ventures’ work to engage community colleges in preparing boomers for encore careers that combine personal meaning, social impact and continued income.

“Our goal has always been to increase the number of community colleges preparing people over 50 for encore careers in fields like education, health care and social services,” says Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of Civic Ventures. “The American Association of Community Colleges is the perfect organization to lead the effort going forward, and we’re so pleased that the Deerbrook Charitable Trust is behind it. The end result will be a great win for people over 50 who need work, for organizations that need experienced staff, and for communities that are working to meet the needs of their citizens.”

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Colleges will be selected competitively after responding to a Request for Proposal that will be issued by AACC in the spring. Selection criteria will include experience in recruiting plus-50 students, redesigning programs/delivery approaches to meet plus-50 learning styles and establishing partnerships with business and community organizations.

Grantee colleges will have access to an existing trove of toolkits and resources to help them reach out to baby boomers. They’ll also benefit from the advice and support of Plus 50 college staff that have worked with older learners for many years and understand their unique needs.

Both existing and soon-to-be-named Plus 50 colleges will comprise a best practices network to support growth, development and sustainability of programs to assist baby boomers nationwide. AACC will develop an implementation manual, based on best practices that will provide support to other colleges seeking to improve services for plus-50 students.

According to Dr. Walter G. Bumphus, AACC’s President and CEO, “This grant supports AACC’s work to increase the number of students who complete degrees, certificates, and other credentials with value in the workplace.” In April 2010, AACC joined other national higher education organizations to promote the development and implementation of policies, practices and institutional cultures that will produce 50 percent more students with high quality degrees and certificates by 2020.

For more information about the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC, go to http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu.

About Deerbrook Charitable Trust
The Deerbrook Charitable Trust is a private foundation. The Trust supports selected local, regional, and national organizations in the United States serving children, youth, and families. The Trust also supports work of selected organizations that improves or increases their effectiveness in delivering services, including efforts to alleviate critical shortages of healthcare providers, non-profit management, and other areas of need identified by the trustees. The Trust is particularly interested in supporting work that intentionally utilizes persons fifty years old and above who wish to use their expertise and life experience to assist organizations and individuals in fulfilling their goals. To learn more, visit www.deerbrooktrust.org

About AACC
Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Association of Community Colleges is the leading advocacy organization representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest sector of higher education, enrolling 13.4 million credit and non-credit students each year. To learn more about the AACC, visit www.aacc.nche.edu.

About Civic Ventures
Civic Ventures is a non-profit think tank on boomers, work and social purpose. To learn more, visit www.encore.org.

About Lumina Foundation
Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis-based private foundation, is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college—especially 21st century students: low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Lumina’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. For more information, log on to www.luminafoundation.org.

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