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Louisiana Pledges to Significantly Increase College Completion; Joins National Alliance Focused on Raising Degree Attainment

BATON ROUGE, La. – Louisiana has joined with Complete College America, a national nonprofit organization working to dramatically increase the number of young adults with a college degree or credential, to set degree goals and develop and implement aggressive state and campus-level action plans to drive success. This initiative complements Louisiana's current goal to increase by 10,000 the number of degrees and credentials earned per year in the state by 2015, especially in high demand fields, and to improve graduation rates at all of our colleges and universities.

Unchanged for decades, the rate at which Americans complete postsecondary degrees falls woefully short of the country's needs and potential. 28% of Louisiana adults between the ages of 25 to 34 have earned a college degree compared to the national average of 38%.

Governor Bobby Jindal said, "Louisiana is honored to join this alliance of states to improve college completion and is grateful for the support of Complete College America in achieving our goals. This partnership signals our strong commitment to implementing bold reforms that will dramatically improve performance at our colleges and universities and success for our students."

Louisiana is the latest to join an 18-state association called Complete College America's Alliance of states, a select group committed to significantly increasing the number of students successfully completing college and closing attainment gaps for traditionally underserved populations. With the addition of Louisiana, states currently in the Alliance are:

Connecticut
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Louisiana

Maryland
Massachusetts
Nevada
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania

Rhode Island
South Dakota
Tennessee
Utah
Vermont
West Virginia

"Governor Jindal and legislative leaders have already charted a new path forward for higher education in Louisiana with the GRAD Act," said Stan Jones, President of Complete College America. "By holding colleges and universities accountable for improving student success and producing more graduates, Louisiana is on its way to a better, stronger economic future. Complete

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College Begins in Preschool

Louisiana Pledges to Increase College Completion – Page 2

College America embraces this kind of visionary leadership and enthusiastically welcomes Louisiana to our Alliance of States.”

Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Sally Clausen said, “We are grateful for the expertise of Stan Jones and Complete College America. A few months ago, he came to Louisiana to discuss our efforts to increase college completion in our state. This partnership, along with the work we are doing to implement the Governor’s GRAD Act and the student transfer guarantee between 2-year and 4-year campuses will mean a significant improvement for the students and citizens of Louisiana.”

Established in 2009, Complete College America will provide Louisiana with tangible and practical support to help implement a range of strategies that will bring needed changes in the culture and practices of its public postsecondary institutions. To join the Alliance a state – in partnership with its colleges and universities – must pledge to make college completion a top priority and commit to:

- Setting state and campus-specific degree and credential completion goals;
- Developing and implementing aggressive state and campus-level action plans for meeting the state’s completion goals; and
- Collecting and reporting common measures of progress toward the state’s completion goals.

Alliance states will receive in-depth technical support from America’s leading experts on improving college success, including assistance in building consensus for reform, developing policy action plans, guidance on applying for and effectively using federal funding to produce more degrees, and annual networking opportunities.

“With the budget challenges facing Louisiana, we welcome both the technical and financial support that the Complete College America Alliance will provide our campuses. We are committed to this work because, ultimately, its success is what will drive our economy forward and make Louisiana a better place for all of its citizens,” said Clausen.

Five national foundations are providing multi-year support to Complete College America, including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education.

“The long-term economic growth of any state is tied to the educational attainment of its citizens,” said Jones. “When it comes to higher education, Governor Jindal understands that more of the same will not do. By committing to reform and making college completion a priority, the Louisiana Way is the path to state prosperity.”

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For more information on Complete College America, visit www.completecollege.org. Media inquiries should be directed to Tom Sugar at (317) 344-2011 or tsugar@completecollege.org.