Agreement Reached to Establish Community College Policy Center

NASHVILLE, July 9, 2009 — Today at the Education Commission of the States’ National Forum on Education Policy, ECS Chair and Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty announced an agreement on behalf of ECS, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and Iowa State University to establish the Community College Policy Center.

The Community College Policy Center (CCPC) will be a critical resource for state policymakers, community college leaders, policy analysts and researchers as they seek to fully leverage community colleges as critical mechanisms for achieving college attainment and workforce development goals. To provide the high quality information that state leaders need, the Policy Center will:

1. Disseminate information on critical policy trends and issues affecting community colleges, such as state and local funding.
2. Produce policy and applied research to include 50-state summaries of policies in areas such as accountability, creating seamless systems between high schools and postsecondary education, remedial education, articulation and transfer.
3. Engage policymakers in live and virtual discussions on developing policy issues such as how community colleges can be better positioned to provide support to regional economic development efforts.
4. Provide technical assistance to policymakers and state and local community college leaders as they seek to develop and implement effective policies and strategies for increasing degree attainment and workforce readiness of their state’s citizens.

“The Community College Policy Center will fill a need for clear, concise, just-in-time information and analysis about the issues our community colleges and their leaders care about most,” said Gov. Pawlenty. “Community colleges will play a critical role in U.S. efforts to lead the world in college attainment, retool the current workforce and successfully compete in the global economy. Governors, legislators and postsecondary leaders need information on the most promising strategies in community colleges so that they can act quickly, creatively, and decisively.”

AED’s Dr. Katherine Boswell, a recognized expert on community college policy, will lead the center’s day-to-day activities.

Dr. Larry Ebbers, Head of the Community College Leadership Program at Iowa State University indicated: “Currently there is no organization that has been monitoring the vast number of research and policy reports on community colleges. We see the Community College Policy Center as an opportunity and natural extension of the
decades-long commitment of Iowa State to conduct research and provide leadership training and support to community colleges across the nation. We are pleased to be part of this partnership.”

Bruce Vandal, Director of the Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development Institute at the Education Commission of the States stated that, “the policy center is consistent with the Commission’s long term commitment to community colleges and the students and communities that they serve.”

“In a time of limited public resources, it is more important than ever for there to be an entity that ensures that the most effective policies and strategies are communicated to state policymakers and college leaders as they seek to leverage their investment in community colleges to drive economic development in their states. Our organizations are absolutely committed to deliberating over the latest and most compelling research and policy with state policy and community college leaders in an effort to provide the assistance they need to develop effective policy,” said Boswell.

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AED is a nonprofit organization that combines great ideas with real-world perspective to change lives by improving health, education, social and economic development. Focusing on the underserved, AED works with domestic and international partners to implement more than 300 programs serving people in all 50 U.S. states and more than 150 countries.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education at all levels. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

The contributions from Iowa State University (ISU) will be through ISU’s Office of Community College Research and Practice (OCCRP) and the Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE). Dedicated to the study and practice of community college leadership, the Iowa State partners conduct rigorous empirical studies on issues affecting policy and practice which impacts students, faculty, administrators and policymakers in the nation’s two-year postsecondary sector. Committed to dissemination, OCCRP and RISE scholars regularly present research findings via publications, presentations, and professional workshops.

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