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## **REPORT SHOWS EARLY COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES BOOST COLLEGE-GOING RATES**

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PORTLAND, ME (January 17, 2008): A new report issued today by the Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute shows convincing evidence that investing in early college opportunities for high school students pays great dividends. Most notably, students who face barriers to higher education but take a college class while still in high school go on to college at rates of 80%, compared with 60% of their peers.

“Clearly, giving high school students—especially those who for whom college is not an automatic next step—a first-hand chance to experience what college is like leads to great things,” said Colleen Quint, executive director of the Mitchell Institute. “The excitement and confidence gained by taking a college class means better outcomes for our students, and our state.” Over the past several years, the numbers of Maine high school students taking college classes for both high school and college credit has more than doubled to over 2,000 students last year. Many different resources are used to support early college programs, including the state's Aspirations Program, grant monies from organizations such as the Great Schools Partnership, and local funding.

“We hope the results of this report lead more schools to develop early college programs,” said Lisa Plimpton, director of research for the Mitchell Institute. “Our research makes clear that early college is one of the most effective strategies we can employ to increase college access.”

The study examined the experiences of nearly 700 students at multiple early college sites across the state. Nearly three-quarters of these students would be the first in their family to pursue a four-year degree. More than half improved their high school GPA after participating in early college, and male students were markedly more likely to show improvement. Nearly 80 percent of students participating earned a grade of 2.0

(equivalent to a C) or better, thus allowing them to earn both high school and college credit for the course. Most importantly, eighty percent of early college students who graduated in 2006 went on to college the following fall, compared with 60% of their peers from their graduating high school class.

The Mitchell Institute is a non-profit organization committed to helping Maine students realize their full potential through readiness for and access to higher education. To date, it has provided \$5.7 million in scholarships supporting nearly 1,400 Maine students, and its research efforts regularly inform public policy and public understanding of barriers to college for Maine students.

## **Early College Program Snapshots**

### **Lewiston High School**

Lewiston High School students can take early college courses at Bates College, Central Maine Community College, and the University of Southern Maine's Lewiston-Auburn campus. The school and colleges share the cost of tuition, and students pay for books and activity fees. Lewiston actively recruits students with B and C averages, especially students who would be the first in their family to attend college, to try early college. During the last two school years, nearly 200 Lewiston students took early college courses, and they earned more than 530 transferable college credits.

- 80% of Lewiston early college students earned grades of C or higher in their college courses.
- More than four in five 2006 graduates who had participated in early college (83%) enrolled in college within a year after graduation, compared with 61% of the entire graduating class.

### **York County Community College**

A 2003 grant from the Great Schools Partnership (formerly the Great Maine Schools Project) funds a dual-enrollment program at Wells High School and York County Community College. The high school identified underperforming juniors and seniors to enroll in YCCC courses, and the program paid for tuition, fees, and books. Highly visible student support at both the high school and the college was a key program component. The program has since expanded to serve several other York County high schools.

- In 2003–2004, 86% of Wells High School students earned grades of C or higher in their college courses.
- 70% of 2006 graduates who were early college participants enrolled in college within a year after graduation, compared with 54% of their entire graduating classes.

### **The University of Maine at Machias**

Five Washington County high schools—Jonesport-Beals, Lubec, Machias, Narraguagus, and Shead—collaborate on an early college program with the University. All juniors and seniors are eligible to enroll in a college course as long as they meet the prerequisites. During the past two school years, 115 students from these high schools took early college classes and earned 333 transferable college credits.

- 88% of these students earned grades of C or higher in their college courses.
- More than four in five 2006 graduates who had participated in early college (84%) enrolled in college within a year after graduation, compared with 52% of the entire graduating classes.

### **University of Maine at Fort Kent**

University of Maine at Fort Kent has developed an early college partnership with three area high schools: Fort Kent Community High School, Madawaska Middle/High School, and Wisdom Middle/High School. The program is designed to expose “at-risk” students to the college-level work. The University allows participants to enroll in any 100- or 200-level course that does not have prerequisites. The program began with 15 students in the fall of 2005. Through the spring 2007 semester, 103 students took one or more early college courses at the University, earning a total of 342 transferable college credits.

- 90% of St. John Valley early college students earned grades of C or higher in their college courses.
- 92% of 2006 graduates who were early college participants enrolled in college within a year after graduation, compared with 69% of their entire graduating classes.