Special Edition: White House Inviting Commitments for Second College Access Summit Dec. 4

When the Obama administration embarked earlier this year on its ambitious initiative to increase access to higher education for low-income students, I joined more than 100 college and university presidents and other higher education leaders at the White House Day of Action on College Opportunity event in January.

At that event, which featured President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, there was a purposeful discussion about what many of us believe is at the heart of our mission and values: our commitment to serving students who otherwise might not earn a college education. And every higher education leader who was present committed to contribute to the solution.

Now, the White House is seeking the participation of higher education institutions in a second Summit Dec. 4 in Washington that will again explore college opportunity, this time with a focus on four areas related to helping more students prepare for and graduate from college. If you are interested in announcing a commitment at the White House summit, please contact one of the four points of contact below or, for general inquiries, Sophie Shulman at the White House Domestic Policy Council at sshulman@who.eop.gov.

Administration officials recognize that colleges and universities are helping students graduate from college every day, but – as they did in January – they expect to convene institutions that are setting new, specific goals and providing serious commitments to meet those goals. While the White House is open to other compelling ideas to increase the number of students earning college degrees, they have indicated interest in four categories of work, believing they offer a potentially major impact without a resulting large cost.

- **College Completion Collaboration**—The first area focuses on colleges and universities that are establishing collaborations around graduating more students, particularly low-income students. These networks demonstrate what can be accomplished when colleges and universities work together to pilot and evaluate promising practices that help students persist, share what is learned, and scale what works. For example, there are articulation agreements between Virginia’s 23 community colleges and many of the state’s four-year public and private colleges and universities. Another example is the University Innovation Alliance, a group of 11 large public research universities, that is identifying and scaling best practices like predictive analytics and proactive advising modeled after Arizona State University, University of Texas at Austin, and Georgia State University. The UIA anticipates that scaling the Georgia State University model across all UIA institutions would result in 61,000 additional graduates and hundreds of millions of dollars in tuition savings over five years. If you plan to make a commitment in this area, please contact Ajita Menon at the White House Domestic Policy Council at amenon@who.eop.gov.

- **K-16 Collaboration**—The second area is K-16 collaborations: higher education institutions working in partnership with school districts, community organizations, business and philanthropy to increase the share of high school students who are on track to enter and succeed in college. For example, the Long Beach College Promise – a partnership between Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach City College and California State University, Long Beach – sets specific goals for college preparation, college access and college success. The resulting structural reforms and incentives have achieved record college enrollment, a reduced need for remediation, and more completion of transfer-level
courses. Similarly, the Dayton, Ohio, region created a consortium of nearly 100 partners that are taking critical steps to strengthen early college readiness, increase high school graduation, and reduce college remediation rates. If you plan to make a commitment in this area, please contact Lauren Thompson at the Department of Education at lauren.thompson@ed.gov.

- **K-12/Postsecondary Counseling and Advising**—The third area involves counseling and advising efforts, a topic of special interest to the First Lady through her *Reach Higher* initiative. The White House is especially interested in initiatives that connect high school counselors with higher education institutions to recruit and enroll at-risk students and projects that align access efforts with college readiness standards. For example, Colorado plans to increase concurrent enrollment by 10 percent a year and raise the FAFSA completion rate by 20 percentage points by incorporating college and career readiness training into its licensure programs for school counselors and increasing the number of school counselors statewide by 600. In Michigan, more than 30 communities have set ambitious goals to increase college enrollment, and the *Michigan College Access Network* is supporting that work by training 150 school counselors in college/career readiness. If you plan to make a commitment in this area, please contact Eric Waldo in the first lady’s office at ewaldo@who.eop.gov.

- **Stem Degree Production**—The final area of focus is increasing the number of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) college graduates. The White House is especially interested in initiatives that focus on college completion for low-income, women, and underrepresented minority STEM students, improve retention in STEM fields, especially by overhauling introductory STEM courses, and support student connections to research and career pathways. For example, ten highly competitive colleges and universities have partnered with the *Posse Foundation* to offer 500 more underserved students $70 million in full-tuition scholarships to STEM programs. The *California State University STEM Collaboratives* provides immersive educational STEM experiences beginning the summer before college and continuing through the entire first year at the CSU, into redesigned gateway courses essential for success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. At *Westminster College* (PA), 46 percent of the STEM faculty are women; Westminster also supports academically strong students who are interested in teaching STEM curricula in nearby high-need, low-income high schools through close mentoring and research opportunities with STEM faculty and scholarship aid. If you plan to make a commitment in this area, please contact Danielle Carnival in the Office of Science and Technology Policy at dcarnival@ostp.eop.gov.

White House officials are looking forward to learning about a large number of commitments to undertake substantial efforts along these lines, and they will be inviting as many college and university presidents and other senior higher education leaders taking action in these areas to attend the Summit as space will allow. We will keep you posted on plans for the Summit as more information becomes available. The *White House hopes to have all nominations in hand by Oct. 31, and we encourage you to submit something by that date if you are interested.*