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Date: May 4, 2010
Contact: Eric Matanyi
Governors State University
Phone: (708) 534-4044
Fax: (708) 534-8399
Email: e-matanyi@govst.edu

For Immediate Release

Chicagoland Alliance for Degree Completion Formed

University Park, IL, May 4, 2010 – Twelve presidents of Chicago-area institutions of higher learning met Friday to announce the formation of an alliance aimed at boosting community college and baccalaureate graduation rates.

The Chicagoland Alliance for Degree Completion will engage in collaborative programs, efforts, and activities that facilitate and enhance student success toward matriculation and degree completion. Governors State University President Elaine P. Maimon hosted the summit at GSU’s University Park campus.

President Maimon and presidents from community college throughout the region agreed to hold their next meeting in June at Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) in Palos Hills. At that time, the presidents will further develop the language in a statement of principles.

Community college presidents taking part in Friday’s summit were: Dr. John Avendano, Kankakee Community College; Dr. Jose Aybar, Richard J. Daley College, Chicago; Ghingo W. Brooks, Malcolm X College, Chicago; Dr. Crawley; George Dammer, South Suburban College, South Holland; Clyde El-Amin, Olive-Harvey College, Chicago; Dr. Charles P. Guengerich, Wilbur Wright College, Chicago; Dr. Gena Proulx, Joliet Junior College; Dr. Eric Radtke, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights; Dr. Lynn M. Walker, Truman College, Chicago; and Dr. John R. Wozniak, Harold Washington College, Chicago.

In her remarks at the summit, Dr. Maimon pointed out that the GSU and 11 community colleges have a total enrollment of 170,000 students. She agreed with a recent assessment of community colleges as “democracy’s colleges,” and said the formation of community colleges in the 1950s was as momentous for the nation as the establishment of land grant universities under the Morrill Act in the 1860s and the GI Bill following World War II. An alliance of institutions joining together to increase the number of college graduates may signal the next great movement in American higher education, she said.

Statistics show that only 10 percent of students who enter community college immediately after high school complete a four year degree after six years of study. The numbers are even lower for African American and Hispanic students. Only 21 percent of community college students complete an associate degree after three years of study; again the percentages are lower for minority students.

"Universities have to do something about these statistics," Dr. Maimon said. "We have to listen to the community colleges, and see what we can do to help students."

Alliance members are expected to share information and coordinate admission and financial aid advising. They plan to address simplification of the transfer process for bachelor's degree completion by engaging in initiatives such as curricular articulation, dual admission, and the establish operation of degree completion centers.

By establishing the alliance, Dr. Maimon said, the presidents were creating an access road for students. "Let's build that road so students can travel wherever their success takes them."