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News from NASFAA

Easy Ways to Promote Early College Awareness

Washington, D.C. (March 2007) – Two new public service media campaigns make it easier than ever to promote early awareness of higher education among underserved student populations.

The U.S. Department of Education and the American Council on Education recently rolled out their respective media campaigns to encourage and prepare more students, especially first-generation, low-income, and minority students, to actively pursue higher education and benefit from federal student aid.

The Campaigns

The Department of Education's "Only a Dream" effort is a national early awareness public service campaign sponsored by the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA). The campaign includes TV, radio, and print public service announcements highlighting Federal Student Aid's core mission: ensuring that all eligible individuals benefit from financial assistance for education beyond high school and to champion the value of postsecondary education. You can view the public service announcements at <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/onlyadream.html>.

The public service announcements and literature, which are produced in both English and Spanish, explain that each year, FSA awards more than \$80 billion in grants, work-study and low-interest loans to help finance the dreams of tomorrow's leaders. Unfortunately, many qualified students do not attend college or apply for financial aid. Using the slogans, "Remember, the most costly education is the one not gotten." and "Federal Student Aid: Start here, go further," the campaign urges families to go to the www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov Web site for further information.

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"Opening Doors of Educational Opportunity"

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The American Council on Education’s “KnowHow2Go” campaign is aimed at encouraging and preparing more low-income and first-generation students to actively pursue higher education.

The campaign advocates four steps that young people should take to prepare for college and communicates these steps through exciting multi-media formats. It encourages students to:

- (1) Actively search for mentors to help them prepare and access college,
- (2) Put in the work needed to qualify for college,
- (3) Do research to find the right college to meet their needs, and
- (4) Find financial aid to help pay for college.

The campaign consists of television and radio public service ads, outdoor billboards, posters, print ads, a national Web site (knowhow2go.org), educational brochures, template documents to use to promote events, a national 1-800 number (1-800-433-3243), and how-to guides to support local outreach efforts. Most of these resources are available in English and Spanish.

Supporting the Campaigns

The success of these campaigns requires effective local participation. Individuals are encouraged to collaborate with education organizations, youth-oriented groups, local colleges and universities, businesses, churches, synagogues, mosques, and others to amplify the impact of the campaigns.

You can easily help these campaigns, and make more students aware about the benefits of higher education, by contacting local radio and TV stations and asking them to play the public service announcements created by the Department and ACE. In addition, you can contact local print media outlets and encourage them to run the print public service announcements created by ACE. You can also encourage others to do the same.

Media outlets receive many public service announcements. The more people that ask them to use the public service announcements provided by the two campaigns, the greater the chances these public service announcements are used. These campaigns rely on grass-roots support to compensate for the lack of large budgets. Simply contacting local media is a great way to leverage this campaign material to have the greatest possible impact and encourage students to set and achieve higher education goals.

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Future Collaboration

Educating individuals who work with middle and high school students about financial aid is another area where financial aid administrators can have a big impact in creating early awareness about college and available resources. Many volunteers and professionals working with underserved youth do not have a good grasp on the basics of federal financial aid. Educating these people creates a ripple effect as they pass this information on to the many students they work with.

FSA receives countless requests for speakers to address audiences about the basics of federal financial aid. It is working to develop a list of financial aid expert that are willing to volunteer at these events to educate high school counselors, as well as those working in TRIO, GEAR UP and similar programs.

In addition to the Department, other groups in the higher education community are exploring ways to leverage financial aid administrators' knowledge so more students can benefit from financial aid and higher education.

Financial aid administrators interested in increasing college awareness among students should consider speaking at these types of events. A little time and effort can have a big impact and help raise financial aid and college awareness among student populations that are traditionally underrepresented on college campuses.

For more information about the media campaigns including links to a wealth of free materials, visit www.nasfaa.org/Subhomes/ABCs/other.html.

By Haley Chitty, Assistant Director for Communications, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Comments may be addressed to the author at ChittyH@NASFAA.org.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 12,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities and career schools across the country. Based in Washington, D.C., NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators. Each year, members help more than 8 million students receive funding for postsecondary education. In addition to its member Web site at www.NASFAA.org, the Association offers a Web site with financial aid information for parents and students at www.StudentAid.org.