

**PRESS RELEASE for January 8, 2008**

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**\*\* EMBARGOED UNTIL: Tuesday, January 8, 2008 \*\***

**CALIFORNIA SLIPS TO 48<sup>TH</sup> IN NATION FOR COLLEGE-GOING**

**Education Advocates Ring in Schwarzenegger's 'Year of Education' to Spotlight Promising Practices and Urge Passage of SB 890 Early Commitment to College**

*Sacramento, Calif.* – California has slipped from 40<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the percentage of high school students who go directly to college, including both 2-year and 4-year colleges. Less than 44% of the state's high school graduates attend college within a year compared with rates as high as almost 70% in the top ranked states, according to the newest rankings from The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

As the State Legislature reconvenes and Governor Schwarzenegger prepares to give his state-of-the-state address, these education advocates are converging in Sacramento to urge California's lawmakers to pass SB 890 Early Commitment to College. The program has a relatively low price-tag, \$125,000 a year, according to the California Department of Education, because it builds on existing programs.

Earlier this year, Governor Schwarzenegger termed 2008 the "Year of Education". Many are wondering what this commitment will look like in a time of budget-crisis. Most agree that something must be done to help California's students reach college and prepare themselves for their futures and the future of the state's economy.

"I've become increasingly concerned that we're not doing all we should to prepare for the future of higher education in this state," stated Senator Jack Scott, author of SB 890. "In fact, recent reports predict significant repercussions if we don't act soon. The demand for educated workers in California will soon outstrip supply and if we do not provide education for our citizens, we will lose our competitive edge."

The strategy of SB 890 is powerful and unique because it packages college and financial aid opportunities into one commitment made to students at an early age – starting in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. And most importantly, passage of the bill is a definitive step that lawmakers can take in a year of belt-tightening to address education issues and California's steady college-going downturn.

"We know California needs an educated workforce, and the Early Commitment to College Act will help us provide it by preparing the young people from our own state for well-paying jobs," said Abdi Soltani, Executive Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity which has organized this event.

The Early Commitment to College Act, SB 890, would renew the promise made in the state's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education: that every qualified student will have the opportunity to attend a community college or university. The strategy behind the bill is to give students the information they need to prepare for college early in order to make the road to college easier.

SB 890 passed through the State Senate and through the Assembly Education and Higher Education Committees last summer, and is set for a vote this year in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, chaired by Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco).

The Campaign for  
**College  
Opportunity**

“Going directly to college gives students the best chance of completing their degrees and obtaining the maximum amount of financial aid,” according to Abdi Soltani, Executive Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity. SB 890 is unique in that it motivates students to finish high school and also prepares them to succeed in college.

Education experts and policymakers will also be convening to recognize 15 emerging ‘Practices with Promise’ – working solutions for college access and success already underway in schools and colleges across the state.

Attendees will hear from Dowell Myers and Hans Johnson, two of the top demographers of California, about the importance of improving education attainment now for the future of the state and its economy.

**Media interested in attending or learning more information should contact Blake Ulveling at: (510) 645-1362 or [blake@collegecampaign.org](mailto:blake@collegecampaign.org).**

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**WHAT:** College Opportunity Day

**WHEN:** Tuesday, January 8, 2008, 10:30 a.m. PST

*Senator Scott will speak at the start of the program followed by time for interviews with other speakers.*

**WHERE:** California State Association of Counties (CSAC) - 1020 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, near the State Capitol.

**WHO:** Maribel Escalera & Eric Kambestad, 6<sup>th</sup> Graders in the Passport to College Program at San Joaquin Delta College.

State Senator Jack Scott, Chair of the Senate Education Committee (D-Pasadena)

Dowell Myers of the University of Southern California  
Hans Johnson of the Public Policy Institute of California

Abdi Soltani, Executive Director, Campaign for College Opportunity.

State Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny, Chair of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee  
Assembly Member John Laird, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Budget  
Assembly Member Anthony Portantino, Chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee  
Assembly Member Tom Berryhill (R-Modesto)

**About the Campaign for College Opportunity:** The Campaign for College Opportunity is a broad-based, bipartisan coalition, including business, education and labor leaders, and is dedicated to ensuring the next generation of Californians has the opportunity to go to college. For more information, visit: [www.collegecampaign.org](http://www.collegecampaign.org).

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