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**As Economic Slowdown Hits Non-degreed Workers Hard,
Colleges Develop Innovative Models to Help Low-Income Adults Graduate**

*Investments in new postsecondary models allow young people
to successfully balance college with jobs and family obligations*

Seattle—The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced today more than \$1.3 million in grants to help colleges in New York City and Washington State to develop innovative programs that will help low-income adults earn degrees or technical certificates with immediate value in the marketplace.

The City University of New York (CUNY), the nation's largest urban public university, is developing an alternative associate degree model designed to significantly increase graduation rates for community college students. In Washington State, the Seattle-King County Workforce Education Collaborative, a partnership of government, industry and philanthropy, is funding six new completion programs designed to dramatically increase graduation rates for low-income working adults.

A college degree—two-year, four-year, or certificate—is a fundamental prerequisite for economic success. The current economic climate has only reinforced the importance of college. The unemployment rate for people without a degree is soaring—almost three times higher than for college graduates over the last two years. Adults 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree have average earnings twice as high as those of high school graduates without college.

Yet fewer than half of all American adults have a college degree, and it's not because they are not starting college. At four-year colleges, just over half of full-time students completed their degree within six years and only about 20 percent of full-time community college students earn a degree three years after entering. Many students are forced to leave school because of financial challenges, the stress of balancing family and work obligations, or because they are not academically prepared.

"Millions of low-income young adults in America have the capability and desire to go to college but not the means, the time, or the support they need to earn a degree," said Hilary Pennington, Director of U.S. Special Initiatives at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "There's never been a more important time to help these students break down the barriers that slow or prevent their educational success and ultimately their economic security."

Across the country, bold leaders are developing innovative designs aimed at not just getting more young people into college, but also ensuring they graduate with a credential that helps

them into a career. These new schools are built first and foremost with the needs of the student in mind.

The investments announced today to the City University of New York and the Seattle-King County Workforce Education Collaborative in Washington will develop two new models of college programs that help low-income students complete degrees that can immediately lead to jobs. These programs will:

- **Partner with technical associations, employers, and industry leaders** to match curriculum to job skill needs and provide post-college employment opportunities;
- **Provide intensive student support**, including academic counseling and community services that enable students to find support services that help them stay in school, such as health insurance and money for child care; and
- **Use innovative curriculum models to accelerate time to completion** that merge pre-college preparation, remedial learning, and credit courses, or deploy coursework in condensed units that help students balance life and school obligations.

CUNY received \$560,000 to support the development of a new community college that takes nontraditional approaches to boost graduation rates. These include intensive pre-college support to prepare students for the college experience; a merging of remedial and credit coursework to help students maintain momentum through their course of study; focused course options that carefully guide students toward graduation and employment; and an Office of Partnerships to develop and manage college connections that will support required student internships and employment opportunities.

CUNY officials will finalize planning for the new college this year with the school slated to open its doors to an initial class of 500 students in 2011. Officials hope to enroll 3,000 students by 2014. The college aims to significantly increase the 2-year and double the existing 3-year rate for students earning an associate degree.

CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said, "We thank the Gates Foundation for its vitally important support as CUNY plans for a new community college very much focused on innovative strategies to significantly enhance degree completion and career positioning in an evolving and unforgiving economy. Our community colleges are bursting at the seams with students eager to attain marketable skills and the credentials they need to successfully compete at all levels of society."

The Gates Foundation provided \$350,000 of a total \$750,000 investment by the Seattle-King County Workforce Education Collaborative to design and pilot six innovative postsecondary programs. These programs bring together 11 community and technical colleges with employers and community-based organizations to create a coordinated, sustainable and county-wide system of postsecondary education tailored for working adults.

Each new program includes: compressed classroom time; reduced complexity of registration, course selection and class scheduling; support services integrated with program structure; and "soft skills" development, labor market knowledge and job placement assistance. The initial investment this year will reach approximately 250 working adults.

"This investment by the Gates Foundation and our other Collaborative partners is allowing us to strengthen our economy by dramatically increasing the number of working adults who obtain skills that are necessary to succeed in a changing economy," said Michael Brown, Vice

President, Community Leadership of the Seattle Foundation, a partner of the Seattle-King County Workforce Education Collaborative. “We’re fundamentally changing how we deliver postsecondary attainment to working adults to benefit both workers and employers.”

With the goal of getting more young people to and through college, the foundation aims to double the number of low-income students who earn a postsecondary degree or credential with genuine value in the workplace by age 26. Since 2000, the foundation has invested nearly \$4 billion in grants in scholarships to improve opportunity in the United States by improving schools, raising college-ready graduation rates, and increasing college completion rates. For more information on the foundation’s investments, go to www.gatesfoundation.org.

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Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.