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Communications Office
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Community College Students Stay in Connecticut

*99% live and work in the state,
contributing to the state's tax base and helping to meet workforce demands*

According to a recent report "Connecticut is likely to have a significant problem in keeping an adequately prepared labor force" if the "brain drain" caused by student out-migration for college is not stemmed. However, the report, co-authored by Dr. Stephen Coelen, goes on to describe components of the higher education system that can fuel Connecticut's workforce, noting "It is significant the Connecticut Community Colleges have the highest finish rate for students starting in the Connecticut public segments—71.5% of students starting in the Community College system finish their post-secondary education there."

The report also shows that high-achieving CAPT students with associate degrees are more likely to stay in the State's work force than their counterparts with bachelor's degrees who scored high on CAPT (Connecticut Academic Performance Test).

Entitled *Connecticut Next Steps: The Role of Education in Preparing for a Quality Work Force*, the report was presented by Coelen at a joint meeting of the Board of Governors for Higher Education and the State Board of Education in January 2008. Coelen is professor-in-residence of economics at the University of Connecticut and managing partner for the World Institute for Strategic Economic Research at Holyoke Community College.

Each year approximately 5,000 students transfer from a Connecticut Community College to continue their studies at private and public two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The majority, approximately 60%, of transfer students from the CCCs pursue advanced degrees at a Connecticut college or university, and are not part of the out-flow of Connecticut students to other states. "Almost 50% of new students entering the CCCs report their primary goal as transferring with an associate degree," said Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor of the CCCs. "And we hope to increase this number through new guaranteed admissions agreements with the University of Connecticut and the State Universities that encourage students to complete their associate degree prior to transferring."

According to the *Next Steps* study, 89% of CCC students who transfer to Connecticut's highly-selective colleges earn degrees there, and 68% of CCC students go on to complete their studies at the University of Connecticut with at least one degree. "Degree-holding is important in leveling the starting wages of students who are otherwise disadvantaged because of race/ethnicity or family poverty," the report continues. The authors conclude that persons who complete college as compared to high school have "higher initial starting salaries and higher growth in such salaries over time."

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Minority enrollments continue to increase at the CCCs—33% since 1998. Approximately two-thirds of Connecticut's African American and Hispanic undergraduates enrolled in public higher education are CCC students. According to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, there will be an expanded minority presence in Connecticut's workforce by 2020, particularly of 25-29-year-olds.

The benefit of a community college education to students is a lifetime of higher earnings. For every year of full-time study, Connecticut Community College associate degree graduates will earn approximately \$5,027 more each year they are in the workforce, according to a 2004 economic impact study by CCbenefits, Inc. The study reported that "every dollar of State money invested in Connecticut's Community Colleges today returns a cumulative \$18.33 over the next 35 years." In addition to increased tax revenues that result from the higher earnings, the report stressed that "Connecticut reaps the benefits of an educated population in attracting and retaining business investments, in avoiding costs for social services, and in building stronger communities."

Nearly all the approximately 100,000 Connecticut Community College (CCC) students remain in Connecticut to live and work. A record-breaking 48,434 students were enrolled in the CCCs in fall 2007, representing approximately 50% of all undergraduates enrolled in Connecticut's public colleges and universities. Over 4,000 students graduate each year from the CCCs with associate degrees and certificates, and approximately 45,000 students enroll each year in short-term non-credit programs which also build skills and offer improved career opportunities.

"Higher education is directly linked to improved earning potential," according to Chancellor Herzog. "And community colleges offer students the opportunity to be successful in earning a degree at the lowest possible cost, in transferring to higher levels of education, and in entering careers and the knowledge economy with the skills needed to succeed."

"Our students know that higher education and the open door offered by the Connecticut Community Colleges are key to discovering themselves, to creating career opportunities and a better quality of life for themselves and their families," said Herzog. "That most stay in Connecticut helps keep our workforce strong."

For more information on the Connecticut Community Colleges, visit www.commnet.edu.

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