

For Immediate Release
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**Student Loans Continue to be Available to Eligible
Connecticut Community College Students**

*Grant aid applications rather than borrowing is best first step;
90% of CCC students awarded grants in '07-'08*

Financial aid continues to make access to higher education possible for thousands of Connecticut Community College (CCC) students each year. A total of \$57 million in financial aid was awarded to CCC students in the 2007-2008 academic year.

Over 50% of all public higher education undergraduates in the state are enrolled at the CCCs, and the 48,434 students enrolled in fall 2007 comprised the largest student body in the history of the CCC System. Financial aid was received by nearly 50%, 21,150, of these students to help them meet their college costs.

Each of the 12 Connecticut Community Colleges offers a comprehensive financial aid program to help eligible students apply for federal, state or college support. To apply for any form of financial aid, CCC students complete the one common free application for financial aid (FAFSA), available in both English and Spanish. The Internet is used by approximately 96% of applicants, who use college kiosks, libraries, welcome centers and financial aid offices to file their applications. Students can track their financial aid applications and awards on the CCCs' secure self-service website available at all times, 24/7.

Financial need is the basis for 99% of the aid awarded at the CCCs. Types of financial aid for eligible CCC students include federal government grants, college work-study, and loans; state government grants; college tuition set-aside programs; and scholarships.

Grant aid was 90% of the financial aid awarded to CCC students in 2007-2008. Grants and scholarships awarded to eligible students do not require repayment.

Grants include the Federal Pell Grant, which 14,000 CCC students received in 2007-2008, and the State's Connecticut Aid to Public College Students (CAPCS) Grant. In support of increasing access to higher education for all students, the CAPCS program was expanded significantly in 2007-2008 with more than \$10 million being added to the funding for community college students.

CCC student financial aid awards increased 106% between the academic years ending in 2001 and 2008, with Federal Pell Grant awards increasing 140%.

The CCCs set aside 15% of student tuition funds to provide college scholarships for students with financial need. Scholarship opportunities vary at each College, and are awarded by the Colleges, the College Foundations, and private donors.

Despite recent reports that some lenders will no longer offer loans to community college students, students at the 12 CCCs who need to borrow will continue to have access to Stafford Loans, the undergraduate Federal student loans. The CCC System provides access to Stafford Loans through its continued participation in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP).

The System has developed a list of recommended FFELP lenders for students to consider if they are looking for loans to help finance their higher education for the 2008-2009 academic year. These lenders have agreed to continue lending to eligible CCC students. Each lender has been objectively evaluated by a committee of financial aid officers and all have been evaluated as providing exemplary service to CCC students and their families. Bank of America, Connecticut Student Loan Foundation, Discover Student Loans, and Wachovia Education Loans will all offer Stafford Loans to eligible CCC students.

Once the student submits the free FAFSA, and the College approves the student for a Stafford Loan, the student may then select one of the four recommended FFLEP lending institutions from which the Stafford Loan funding will be borrowed. However, CCC students are not required to use any of these four, and may select any lender who participates in the FFELP, or may choose to apply for alternative or private loans.

Only nine percent of CCC students seeking financial aid took any type of loan in 2007-2008. "Our Colleges have never recommended alternative loan or private loan financing," said Thomas Bradham, director of financial aid services for the System of CCCs. "We have ample opportunity for our students through the Federal loan program."

Before considering student loan opportunities, however, CCC students are encouraged to apply for grants or scholarships, which, unlike the borrowed funds in loans, do not need to be repaid.

"With the full-time annual tuition and fees at \$2,984 for the 2008-2009 academic year, the Connecticut Community Colleges continue to offer affordable higher education to our citizens," said Bradham. "And the financial aid packages and services available to CCC students who need it make higher education accessible to increasing numbers of students each year."

For more information on the financial aid services of the Connecticut Community Colleges, please contact your local CCC, or visit www.commnet.edu.

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