

NEWS RELEASE

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Mitchell Institute Begins Surveys for Follow-Up Study of Barriers to College in Maine

Portland, ME (December 11, 2006): **This past week, the Mitchell Institute and Pan Atlantic SMS Group began a statewide survey of Maine parents, high school students, young adults and educators as part of a major study of barriers to college.**

In 2002, the Mitchell Institute published *Barriers to Postsecondary Education in Maine: Making College the Obvious and Attainable Next Step for More Maine Students*, which explored the gap between Maine's strong high school completion rate and its below average college-going rate and identified strategies for making college more accessible to Maine students. Interest in the first Barriers report was high among the media, policymakers and educators in Maine, and the findings continue to be used.

In early 2006, the Mitchell Institute received grants from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and Bank of America to conduct a second Barriers study focusing on the growing gap between college intentions and actual college enrollment among Maine high school graduates. Since 2000, intent to enroll in college has grown from 64% to 71% of graduating seniors, but actual enrollment has dropped from 54% to 49%. The "Barriers II" study has four components:

- Creation of a statewide data set of college enrollment among graduates of participating Maine high schools;
- Interviews to learn about the educational experiences, goals, and challenges faced by high school students and recent graduates all over the state, conducted by student researchers (including Mitchell Scholars) from several Maine colleges;
- Surveys to document the attitudes regarding high school and college of 900 Maine parents, 900 high school students, 600 young adults, and 500 high school and college educators;
- Profiles of Maine schools and communities with recommended practices for helping more students make successful transitions from high school to college.

Said Senator George Mitchell, the founder of the Mitchell Institute, "I am personally deeply grateful to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and Bank of America for their involvement in this important project. During my many years of public service to the State of Maine, it became very clear to me that higher education is the key to Maine's economic future. This report will give our state important insights on how to tackle the barriers that so many of our young people are facing as they look beyond high school."

The findings from "Barriers II" will be released in July 2007, the fifth anniversary of the original Barriers report.

The core mission of the Mitchell Institute is to increase the likelihood that young people from every community in Maine will aspire to, pursue and achieve a college education. Each year, a Mitchell Scholarship is awarded to a graduating senior from every public high school in Maine who will be attending a two-or four-year postsecondary degree program. Selection is based on academic promise, financial need and a history of community service. The Mitchell Institute has awarded more than \$5 million in financial assistance to more than 1,250 Maine students since 1995.

Mitchell Institute support programs create ongoing Scholar involvement in leadership and professional development, as well as community service and mentoring activities. The Mitchell Institute believes that through participation in these activities, Mitchell Scholars will be more inclined to remain in Maine to live and work after graduation. The Mitchell Institute strengthens the involvement of a new generation of civic-minded and committed citizens, all the while creating educational opportunity for Maine's young people.

For more information about the Mitchell Institute, please visit www.mitchellinstitute.org.

*Based in Quincy, Massachusetts, the **Nellie Mae Education Foundation** is the largest philanthropy in New England that focuses exclusively on promoting access, quality and effectiveness of education. Established in 1998, the Foundation provides grants and other support to education programs in New England that are designed to improve low-income and underserved students' academic achievement and access to higher education. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$63 million in grants and support to education programs in the region. For more information, visit www.nmefdn.org.*

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