

PRESS ALERT

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Mitchell Institute to Hold Press Conference to Release “From High School to College: Removing Barriers for Maine Students”

Portland, ME (July 13, 2007): The Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute will hold a press conference on **Wednesday, July 18, 2007, at 11:00 a.m. at the Bank of America Board Room, 100 Middle St, West Wing, 2nd Floor, in Portland**, to release the results of a year-long study, **From High School to College: Removing Barriers for Maine Students**. This report, funded by the **Nellie Mae Education Foundation** and **Bank of America** and known as **Barriers II**, explores the growing gap between college intentions and enrollment.

In 2002, the Mitchell Institute's **Barriers I** report addressed the gap between Maine's strong high school completion rate and its below average college-going rate, but since then, while intent to enroll in college among Maine high school graduates has steadily increased, actual college enrollment has not.

The 2007 **Barriers II** research involved creation of a statewide data set on college enrollment trends; student interviews at 19 high schools around the state; online and telephone surveys of over 3,000 Maine educators, parents, students, and young adults; and examination of promising practices in dozens of Maine schools and communities.

For five years, the results of **Barriers I** have been widely utilized and cited by educators and policymakers. This research helped to secure a \$10 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for the Great Maine Schools Project (now the Great Schools Partnership), which works to strengthen Maine high schools. The data compiled for **Barriers II** provides a better understanding of the evolution of college enrollment trends in Maine, and benchmarks current beliefs of students, parents and educators. This report also identifies best practices for helping more Maine students realize their college aspirations, and recommends ways in which Maine schools, colleges, businesses, parents, and students can make a difference.

Senator George Mitchell stated, "I encourage everyone in Maine communities to review the findings and the action steps recommended in our study. The economic future of Maine and the quality of life of its citizens depend upon ensuring that our youth have access to a college education. We simply cannot afford to fail in this effort. **This report provides effective strategies for removing remaining barriers to college for Maine students, and we present it with great hope that it will help educators and families achieve this goal."**

Scheduled to participate in the press conference are:

- **Colleen Quint**, Executive Director, Mitchell Institute
- **Nicholas Donohue**, President, Nellie Mae Education Foundation
- **Nancy Meagher**, Market Development Manager, Bank of America
- **Lisa Plimpton**, Director of Research, Mitchell Institute
- **Dustin Brooks**, Bowdoin Student Researcher and Mitchell Scholar
- **Susan Gendron**, Maine Commissioner of Education
- **William C. Hiss**, Research Committee Chair, Mitchell Institute Board of Directors

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. In addition, Mitchell Institute support programming helps to ensure college success for scholarship recipients. Selection is based on academic promise, financial need and a history of community service. From 1995 to 2007, the Mitchell Scholarship Program has awarded almost \$5.7 million in financial assistance to nearly 1,400 Maine students. ●●●