

PRESS RELEASE

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Early College Opportunities Boost College-Going Rates

Portland, ME (January 17, 2008): A new report issued today by the Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute shows convincing evidence that investing in early college opportunities for high school students pays great dividends. **Most notably, students who face barriers to higher education but take a college class while still in high school go on to college at rates of 80%, compared with 60% of their peers.**

“Clearly, giving high school students – especially those who for whom college is not an automatic next step – a first-hand chance to experience what college is like leads to great things,” said Colleen Quint, executive director of the Mitchell Institute. “The excitement and confidence gained by taking a college class means better outcomes for our students, and our state.”

Over the past several years, the numbers of Maine high school students taking college classes for both high school and college credit has more than doubled to over 2,000 students last year. Many different resources are used to support early college programs, including the state’s Aspirations Program, grant monies from organizations like the Great Schools Partnership, and local dollars.

“We hope the results of this report lead more schools to develop early college programs,” said Lisa Plimpton, director of research for the Mitchell Institute. **“Our research makes clear that early college is one of the most effective strategies we can employ to increase college access.”**

The study examined the experiences of nearly 700 students at multiple early college sites across the state. Nearly three-quarters of these students would be the first in their family to pursue a four-year degree. More than half improved their high school GPA after participating in early college and male students were markedly more likely to show improvement. Nearly eighty percent of students participating earned a grade of 2.0 (equivalent to a C) or better, thus allowing for both high school and college credit for the course. **Most importantly, eighty percent of early college students who graduated in 2006 went on to college the following fall, compared with 60% of their peers from their graduating high school class.**

For more information or to view a copy of the full report, please visit the Mitchell Institute website (www.mitchellinstitute.org). The Mitchell Institute is a non-profit organization committed to helping Maine students realize their full potential through readiness for and access to higher education. To date it has provided \$5.7 million in scholarships supporting nearly 1,400 Maine students, and its research efforts regularly inform public policy and public understanding of barriers to college for Maine students.