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For Immediate Release

March 2, 2010

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Massachusetts Pledges to Significantly Increase College Completion by 2020 *Joins National Alliance Focused on Raising Degree Attainment*

BOSTON—Signifying its intent to take the bold action necessary to increase college completion rates, Massachusetts has joined with Complete College America, a national nonprofit organization working to dramatically increase the number of young adults with a college degree or credential, to set degree goals and develop and implement aggressive state and campus-level action plans to meet those goals.

Unchanged for decades, the rate at which Americans complete postsecondary degrees falls woefully short of the country's needs and potential. As a knowledge economy competing in the global market, Massachusetts is dependent upon the quality and ability of its college graduates more so than many other states. And in the state's economy, the majority of jobs in the high-growth sectors require college degrees.

"We can and should put college within reach of every willing young person, for the sake of their future and ours," said Governor Deval Patrick. "We share these goals with Complete College America and look forward to working with them."

Massachusetts and 16 other states form the Complete College Alliance of states, a select group of leading states committed to significantly increasing the number of students successfully completing college and closing attainment gaps for traditionally underserved populations. Other states currently in the Alliance are:

Connecticut
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Maryland

Nevada
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Dakota

Tennessee
Utah
Vermont
West Virginia

"Less than forty percent of young adults hold an Associate Degree or higher," said Stan Jones, President of Complete College America. "The numbers for most states are even worse. For states and America to be competitive, six of ten adults between the ages of 25 and 35 will need to hold

a postsecondary degree or credential of value in the labor market by 2020. That's why the commitment made by Governor Patrick to students and the higher education institutions that serve them is so important to Massachusetts' long-term economic and social well-being."

Massachusetts' participation in Complete College America will be coordinated by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). This work will complement the DHE's involvement in other national initiatives aimed at increasing college completion rates, the sum of which contribute directly to the DHE's overall objective to contribute to the Commonwealth's wellbeing by producing the best-educated workforce and citizenry in the nation.

"As Massachusetts seeks to rebuild and sustain its knowledge economy, it is essential that we in higher education do our part by leading efforts to eliminate achievement gaps and improve degree completion rates, particularly in key areas of workforce need," said Richard M. Freeland, Commissioner of Higher Education in Massachusetts. "In these challenging economic times, I am grateful for the support of Complete College America, which will help us leverage our scarce resources to achieve these objectives and build a better future for the Commonwealth and its residents."

Established in 2009, Complete College America will provide Massachusetts with tangible and practical support to help implement a range of strategies that will bring needed changes in the culture and practices of its public postsecondary institutions. To join the Alliance a state—in partnership with its colleges and universities—must pledge to make college completion a top priority and commit to:

- Setting state and campus-specific degree and credential completion goals;
- Developing and implementing aggressive state and campus-level action plans for meeting the state's completion goals; and
- Collecting and reporting common measures of progress toward the state's completion goals.

Alliance states will receive in-depth technical support from America's leading experts on improving college success, including assistance in building consensus for reform, developing policy action plans, guidance on applying for and effectively using federal funding to produce more degrees, and annual networking opportunities.

Five national foundations are providing multi-year support to Complete College America, including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education.

"The long-term economic growth of any state is tied to the educational attainment of its citizens," said Jones. "Reform-minded states like Massachusetts are taking the lead in addressing this serious national issue head on. The implications of 'business as usual' are too great not to act. That's why the leadership taken by Massachusetts will have such a profound impact in the state and beyond."

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