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ICAN Announces Independent Nonprofit Foundation Status
Transition Will Expand Free College Planning Services Offered to Iowa Students

WEST DES MOINES, IOWA (Sept. 22, 2009) — The Iowa College Access Network® (ICAN) officially announced today that it has established itself as an independent nonprofit foundation. The move will provide new opportunities for the organization to grow its free college planning services as well as expanded funding options, ICAN manager Juan Garcia said today at a press conference in Cedar Rapids.

ICAN, which provides a compilation of free services for middle school, high school and college students and their families, was previously a division of Iowa Student Loan®. In August, the Iowa Student Loan board of directors acted on the recommendation of its ICAN Task Force and authorized ICAN to become an independent nonprofit organization with its own governance board.

“ICAN makes a difference in the lives of our students and families by providing timely and helpful information on all levels of the education spectrum,” said newly appointed ICAN board member DeLores Hawkins, who is director of student financial aid at Des Moines Area Community College. “I am pleased to be a member of a team that truly cares about the education and futures of the people they serve.”

ICAN will now be in position to continue providing vitally needed college planning services to Iowa students and families while maintaining its strong customer and public confidence, according to the Iowa Student Loan board. This transition also allows ICAN access to additional sources of funding as its programs continue to expand.

ICAN will be able to compete for external funding through federal and state grants, national and local foundations, and businesses and industries. These funds, combined with contributions from Iowa Student Loan in the coming years, will help ICAN expand its services and further assist other Iowa educational organizations. In addition to a significant gift from Iowa Student Loan to launch the foundation, ICAN recently received \$140,000 from the national KnowHow2GO campaign to redistribute to the Iowa organizations that can most effectively encourage students to pursue postsecondary education.

Today, several Cedar Rapids-area school and community leaders celebrated the launch of ICAN as a nonprofit educational foundation at The Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. Newly appointed ICAN board members Lew Montgomery of Cedar Rapids and Alfred Ramirez of the Quad Cities spoke about ICAN's impact on eastern Iowa students and their families.

"The national educational epidemic of a combined high dropout rate and low percentage of college graduates impacts all of us," said Ramirez, principal consultant for Diverse Strategies in Rock Island, Ill. "ICAN is a unique and exceptional one-stop remedy and resource. Dedicated staff, board members, and local and national partners combine efforts to help students and families achieve their educational goals and dreams."

New ICAN board member Dick Schwab said he is committed to the organization because its services provide critical opportunities for postsecondary education. "Postsecondary education is the portal to a middle-class or better lifestyle," said Schwab, who was elected this month to the Solon School Board. "Every student in this state, and in this country, must be given the opportunity to pursue a postsecondary education."

Cedar Rapids is home to one of two ICAN College Planning Centers, which has been a member of the community since 2006. The ICAN College Planning Center in West Des Moines celebrated its 10-year anniversary last year.

"This was really the best move for ICAN at this time," Garcia said. "ICAN will continue to offer a wide range of free services to help students plan for, apply to, pay for and succeed in college. We'll also continue to work with Iowa's school counselors and the professionals striving to keep at-risk students in school. If anything, our services will improve.

“We’re very excited about the opportunity to grow, especially now that lowans need what we offer more than ever,” he added.

ICAN provides free information on how to succeed in education through a variety of means. Presentations with accompanying materials are offered in Iowa high schools to help students and families plan for college, apply for financial aid, succeed in high school and college, and manage financial decisions. In addition, monthly e-newsletters cover timely topics for high school and college students, and www.ICANSucceed.org provides easy access to more detailed topics. Many of ICAN's services and materials are available in Spanish.

High school counselors, outreach programs, college professionals and others who work with students also benefit through ICAN's webinars, annual conference, e-newsletters and training resources.

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About ICAN

ICAN is the College Access Network for Iowa, as designated by the National College Access Network (NCAN). The ICAN College Planning Centers in West Des Moines and Cedar Rapids provide free information and support to students and their families as they plan their postsecondary education and apply for financial aid. All ICAN services are free. Major funding for ICAN is provided by Iowa Student Loan[®]. For more information about ICAN, call (877) 272-4692 or visit www.ICANSucceed.org.