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## Every High School Needs “College Proficiency” Information

*Recent federal investments highlight momentum to understand graduates’ success after high school*

Washington, D.C. – December 3, 2009 – According to *The Promise of Proficiency*, which will be released by College Summit and the Center for American Progress at an event today, the federal government must do more to ensure that every American high school knows how their graduates are performing in college. “College proficiency” data—both aggregate and anonymous student-unit data showing whether their graduates have completed one year of postsecondary training, helps high schools understand how better to prepare their students for postsecondary success.

Today, principals rely on anecdotal information about the postsecondary performance of their graduates; instead, the paper, which includes information gathered from interviews with innovative school leaders across the country, argues that systemic, comprehensive, and methodically-gathered college proficiency information is needed.

From chancellors to superintendents to principals, education leaders interviewed discussed the need to know how all their high school graduates are performing in postsecondary study, and that currently, there is not even a rudimentary system for finding out if what the schools are doing is working.

“While there is an expectation, there is no systemic way to understand whether students are enrolling and remaining in college. Without this information, even the most reform-minded principal will not know how his or her graduates are doing after graduation,” said Cynthia Brown, Vice President for Education Policy at the Center for American Progress.

In November 2009, as part of its \$4.3 billion “Race to the Top” fund’s guidelines, the U.S. Department of Education asked that States integrate concepts of college enrollment and proficiency into their respective education reform agendas; states’ applications must articulate their plans to “[increase] college enrollment... and [increase] the number of students who complete at least a year’s worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment.”

“Race to the Top’s highlighting of college enrollment and proficiency represents an important milestone for the issues presented in *The Promise of Proficiency*,” said J.B. Schramm, Founder and CEO of College Summit and the report’s co-author. “The federal government should build on this momentum to address the issue even more systemically.”

The paper recommends that the federal government:

- Support the gathering of college proficiency data by school, so that each school can see how their students are doing in “Year 13,” or the first year after college
- Disseminate the data and train educators to interpret the information such that they are empowered to lead relevant programmatic change
- Support and reward high schools for progress in college proficiency, thus encouraging the visibility of and activity toward this success outcome

The paper outlines emerging tools that are making college enrollment and proficiency information easier to obtain. When districts couple postsecondary measurement with systemic supports, they achieve dramatic gains. Two leading examples cited are Chicago Public Schools and St. Louis Public Schools, which have measured their college enrollment rates and instituted systemic reform during this past decade.

*The Promise of Proficiency* was supported by Deloitte LLP as part of its long-term commitment to leverage a blend of cash, pro bono, board service, volunteering, mentoring and thought leadership to make college-going the norm for all students.

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*College Summit is a national nonprofit founded in 1993. It partners with school districts and states to increase their college-going rates by fostering a high school culture where college-going is the expectation, not the exception. College Summit is the largest provider of college-going culture support in the United States, currently reaching 25,000 students at 170 schools in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Learn more at [www.collegesummit.org](http://www.collegesummit.org)*

*The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”*