



## JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:  
**Jeff Landis, PR Director**  
617.728.4446 ext. 146 (office)  
978.473.6346 (cell)  
jlandis@jff.org

### Are College Retention Programs a Smart Investment?

#### 13 Colleges and Universities Find Out as part of the *Investing in Student Success* Program

**BOSTON, MA (January 4, 2010)**—Many colleges and universities do not measure the cost-effectiveness of campus programs, leaving administrators without the information necessary to gauge whether student retention programs are worth the investment. A one-year pilot project, *Investing in Student Success*, funded by Walmart Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education, has developed an instrument that allows programs to evaluate if they are using their resources effectively.

The primary product of *Investing in Student Success* is the **Cost-Return Calculator**, a resource that can help campus and program administrators compare the costs of student success programs to the programs' impact on student retention. By entering data on program costs and outcomes, campus administrators can measure what percentage of program costs are recouped by additional revenues associated with increased student retention. The **Cost-Return Calculator** has been tested and refined by 13 colleges involved in the *Investing in Student Success* pilot and further reviewed by an advisory group of higher education experts drawn from the fields of student learning and engagement, institutional research, program administration, and finance. Nearly all 13 colleges and universities experienced a "change in conversation" around first-year programs, student outcomes, and cost-effectiveness due to involvement with this pilot.

Jobs for the Future and the Delta Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity and Accountability, managers of the pilot program, recruited the 13 colleges and universities to participate in *Investing in Student Success*. Each institution had student success programs considered effective at serving first year students, especially low-income, and first-generation students at risk of not graduating. The pilot included public and private colleges, and two- and four-year institutions. The *Investing in Student Success* pilot—and its focus on cost-effectiveness programming that can foster student success—is aligned with Lumina Foundation's productivity work aimed at increasing the number of U.S. graduates within available resources.

"For U.S. businesses and workers to remain globally competitive, the nation's higher education system must find ways to graduate more students without spending more money," said Marlene B. Seltzer, president and CEO of Jobs for the Future. "The key is to use data to identify which programs do the best job of keeping students enrolled and advancing them to degrees—and to understanding which programs do this the most efficiently."

"Colleges have developed promising first-year and remedial programs for promoting student success. But evaluations seldom mention cost," said Jane Wellman, executive director of the Delta Project. "By adding the dimension of cost, institutions will be better able to make informed decisions about how to invest limited dollars in ways that help students succeed."

The 13 *Investing in Student Success* colleges that worked with the **Cost-Return Calculator** are: City College of San Francisco (CA); Trinity Washington University (DC); Kennesaw State University (GA); Valencia Community College (FL); Indiana University Purdue University–Indianapolis (IN); University of Missouri–Kansas City (MO); Appalachian State University (NC); Medgar Evers College–City University of New York (NY); Wagner College (NY); Wright State University (OH); Zane State College (OH); University of Texas at El Paso (TX); and University of Wisconsin–Parkside (WI).

To download the **Cost-Return Calculator**, visit either Making Opportunity Affordable [www.makingopportunityaffordable.org](http://www.makingopportunityaffordable.org) or the Delta Cost Project [www.deltacostproject.org](http://www.deltacostproject.org).

### **About Jobs for the Future**

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In over 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. JFF works with the Lumina Foundation for Education on its productivity initiatives to provide research, idea development, and grant management support.

[www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)

### **About the Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity, and Accountability**

The mission of the Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity, and Accountability is to help improve college affordability by controlling costs and improving productivity. The work is animated by the belief that college costs can be contained without sacrificing access or educational quality through better use of data to inform strategic decision-making.

[www.deltacostproject.org](http://www.deltacostproject.org)

### **About Philanthropy at Walmart**

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are proud to support the charitable causes that are important to customers and associates in their own neighborhoods. Through its philanthropic programs and partnerships, the Walmart Foundation funds initiatives focused on creating opportunities in education, workforce development, economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and health and wellness. From February 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009, Walmart—and its domestic and international foundations—gave more than \$423 million in cash and in-kind gifts globally.

[www.walmartfoundation.org](http://www.walmartfoundation.org)

### **About Lumina Foundation for Education**

Lumina Foundation for Education is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college—especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change.

[www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org)