

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Brandy Johnson, Executive Director
517-316-1713 office
313-454-1387 cell
brandy@micollegeaccess.org

Michigan College Access Network Calls On Secretary Duncan to Preserve Federal Grant Funding

Loss of Federal Dollars to Impact Michigan Students Wishing to Earn Degrees

December 16, 2011 – Lansing, MI – The leaders of a statewide organization helping to get more Michigan students to go to college and earn degrees today called on Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to preserve federal grant funding for college access work in Michigan. Federal officials had earlier denied Michigan’s request for a waiver needed to maintain funding for the state’s College Access Challenge Grant, but a November 23rd letter from Superintendent Mike Flanagan asked Secretary Duncan to reverse that decision.

“The same federal department that has praised our use of this grant is now prepared to take it away from Michigan, simply because the collapse of our manufacturing economy made cuts inevitable across our budget,” said Michigan College Access Network Executive Director Brandy Johnson. “If Secretary Duncan puts what’s best for students first, he’ll make sure Michigan’s grant is restored.”

Since 2008, officials at the US Department of Education have applauded Michigan’s catalytic use of these federal funds. MCAN, Michigan Department of Education, and other partners have leveraged the grant to secure millions of additional matching funds from The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and more than a dozen local community foundations. MCAN has used the grant to provide seed funding to 43 “local college access networks” which are community-based collaboratives committed to a coordinated strategy laser-focused on dramatically increasing their local college-going and college-completion rates. In addition, funding from the federal grant has allowed Michigan to hire 32 full-time recent UM and MSU graduates who serve as college advisers in 40 high need high schools throughout the state. MDE is using the funds to strengthen the efforts of 10 communities working to establish place-based universal scholarship programs inspired by The Kalamazoo Promise. MCAN has also awarded sub-grants to Michigan community colleges committed to employing innovative strategies to ensure students leave their doors with a degree or postsecondary credential in hand.

Board members of MCAN say without Duncan’s action, college access work will be cut back in more than 40 Michigan communities in the weeks ahead. The MCAN Board statement came on the heels of an announcement by the US Education Department that Michigan had for the third time been rejected for funding through the Department’s Race to the Top competition. The College Access Challenge Grant, in contrast, is awarded to the states by formula. Federal officials, however, have said they will revoke Michigan’s grant because they disagree with state spending decisions for 2010.

-more-

Our Goal: 60% college attainment by 2025

Page 2 – Preserve Federal Grant cont.

Federal statutes specifically grant the Education Secretary the ability to waive the “Maintenance of Effort” requirement of the CACG when the economic and fiscal conditions of the state warrant that action. The budget in question in Michigan (FY 2010) was set in the immediate aftermath of the bankruptcies of General Motors and Chrysler when General Fund Revenues declined by more than 18%.

“In order for Michigan to help President Obama and Secretary Duncan reach their goal of once again regaining our prominence as the most well educated country in the world, we need support from our partners in Washington,” said Johnson. “Michigan’s exceptional and uncontrollable economic circumstances in late 2009 clearly warrant a waiver approval.”

MCAN’s Board emphasized that developing an educated workforce in Michigan will serve as the critical impetus to rebuilding and sustaining Michigan’s economic strength and the health of its communities.

###

About Michigan College Access Network

As the leader in the state’s college access movement, MCAN’s mission is to dramatically increase Michigan’s college participation and completion rates, particularly among low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color. In order to build and sustain a vibrant economy and strong communities based on a highly educated population, MCAN works to ensure everyone in Michigan has the opportunity to access and succeed in postsecondary education. For more information, visit www.micollegeaccess.org.

Our Goal: 60% college attainment by 2025