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New program aims to increase digital literacy and Internet usage in underserved California communities

(Sacramento, California - August 20, 2010) - The Foundation for California Community Colleges is proud to announce California Connects, a new program that will increase digital literacy and expand broadband Internet access to underserved populations throughout the state. The program is funded by a \$10.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration for Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The three-year program will provide outreach, training and educational support in key communities throughout the state, and will ultimately provide access to more than 61,000 broadband users in California through three primary components:

- In collaboration with the California Community College Technology Center housed at Butte Community College, an online digital literacy program will be made available to provide the educational support and tools needed to help enhance the online aptitude of individuals for whom computer and Internet use is still a challenge.
- Support will be provided to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in its statewide efforts to provide laptop computers to community college Math, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) students who participate in community service.
- In partnership with the Great Valley Center, an affiliate of UC Merced, efforts will be made to expand the access of broadband technology and conduct outreach to promote digital literacy with an emphasis on serving low-income residents in the Central Valley region.

"In this digital age, having the tools and ability to connect to the Internet is vastly important, but even today is not always feasible in many communities," said Dr. Paul Lanning, President of the Foundation for California Community Colleges. "California Connects will provide real lifelong incentives to individuals who have not previously had access or resources to learn digital literacy skills, acquire computers, or connect to the Internet. This program will provide a direct, tangible, and long-lasting benefit to underserved populations."

“This program will help to close the digital divide that still exists in many communities and will provide a foundation for economic growth and job creation for decades to come,” said Dr. Barry Russell, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for the California Community Colleges. “What’s more, the collaborative nature of this program transcends the boundaries of any one specific educational system; California Connects will help to ensure students at all three systems of higher education in California, along with other segments of the population, have access to the digital education and training that is necessary in today’s economy.”

California Connects represents a collaboration of numerous organizations, including the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, the California STEM Learning Network (CSLNet), the California Community College Technology Center housed at Butte College, and the Great Valley Center affiliated with UC Merced.

Funded as part of more than \$200 million in recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grants specifically supporting California projects, California Connects is expected to fully launch later this fall. Additional details, along with program contacts, will be made available at the Foundation for California Community Colleges’ Web site at www.foundationccc.org.

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The **Foundation for California Community Colleges** is the official non-profit foundation to the California Community Colleges’ Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office. The Foundation’s mission is to benefit, support, and enhance the missions of the California Community College system, the largest higher education system in the nation. Incorporated in 1998, the Foundation works with Community Colleges and partner organizations to manage donations, grants, programs, and services that drive excellence in education while saving millions of dollars for colleges each year. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation and receives no direct state or public support. *For more information, visit www.foundationccc.org*

The **California Community Colleges** is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.89 million students per year. The system is also the largest provider of workforce training in the nation. Nearly 25 percent of all the community college students nationwide are enrolled in a California community college. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.