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Coalition to Corral Recent Graduates Who Will Advise Kids on How to Go to College

AmeriCorps provides \$50,000 to plan the initiative

Columbus, Ohio - The Ohio Community Service Council recently awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) to plan a statewide partnership that will recruit and train recent college graduates to advise high school students on how to access education beyond high school.

OCAN along with The Ohio State University Economic Access Initiative, Cleveland Scholarship Programs and Cincinnati Youth Collaborative will lead an AmeriCorps project that will expand upon the work of high school guidance counselors and college access advisors serving Ohio's low-income and at-risk youth. The young adults recruited to participate in this initiative can draw upon their recent college experiences to offer fresh insight into preparing for, funding, attending and graduating from postsecondary schools.

Some school systems in Ohio lack the resources to provide staff who can help students take the proper steps toward college. Modeled in part after the National College Access Network's (NCAN) Advising Corps as well as the Admission Possible program located in Minneapolis, the AmeriCorps grant partners are planning strategic assistance with both rural and urban emphases in Northeast Ohio. Specifically, strategies in rural Lorain County and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District will complement the activities already taking place in Cincinnati during their second year with the AmeriCorps project.

"OCAN is excited to expand AmeriCorps activities in Ohio because it will make a direct and dramatic impact on the lives of students," said Dr. Reginald A. Wilkinson, OCAN president and CEO. "This approach also supports the Ohio Board of Regents' citation that one way to improve the state's educational productivity is by encouraging collaborations that address unmet educational needs in underserved regions."

Additionally, according to a January 2008 article published by the American Sociological Association, a school's commitment to helping students get into college can have a powerful effect on postsecondary attendance and counteract the negative impacts of poverty and poor

family support for postsecondary education. Studies on the impact of pre-college counseling support the fact that advice offered in schools plays a significant role in students' college enrollment rates. When schools have systems, staff and resources in place to link students with postsecondary education and a culture that values college-going, students are more likely to enter four-year postsecondary institutions regardless of their race or socio-economic background.

Upon completion of the grant's planning phase, the partners will work to expand the AmeriCorps volunteer efforts already taking place in Greater Cincinnati to provide comprehensive college access advising statewide.

*The **Ohio College Access Network (OCAN)** was founded in 1999, by KnowledgeWorks Foundation, in collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Business Roundtable. OCAN works to establish college access programs across the state and is the first statewide coordinating body for college access programs in the nation. The goal of the organization is to help more Ohio students pursue postsecondary education through the work of local college access programs, which provide financial aid advising, last dollar grants, career guidance, and other services. Currently, 36 college access programs serve nearly 300 of Ohio's 612 school districts, and 17 private/parochial schools in 46 counties touching over 175,000 students annually.*

***Cincinnati Youth Collaborative**, a leader in youth development programs since 1987, creates, facilitates and supports positive educational, social and economic programs to benefit the region's youth, principally Cincinnati Public School-age and young-adult populations. Focusing on two primary areas-Mentoring and College Access-CYC brings together people, institutions, and other community resources to help youth graduate from high school, enter post-secondary education, or obtain employment.*

***Cleveland Scholarship Programs (CSP)** is the oldest college access program in the nation that is often emulated around the country. Each year, CSP provides educational opportunity and workforce development by counseling more than 23,000 Greater Cleveland residents of all ages about postsecondary educational options. CSP helps them to access, finance and complete higher education and awards an average of \$2.8 million in scholarships to more than 2,000 individuals annually.*

***Ohio State University's Economic Access Initiative** was created in 2006 to promote university partnerships in helping young people and their families understand the steps to a college education. The Initiative also works with to help encourage Ohio State's own first generation students to consider and plan for graduate education.*