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Funding Available for California Community Colleges to Prepare Foster Youth for Independence

SACRAMENTO – The Foundation for California Community Colleges is currently seeking applications for grant funding that will support efforts to provide foster youth with vital skill-enhancement services and resources.

Through Youth Empowerment Strategies for Success California (YESS-California), grants ranging from \$70,000 to \$90,000 will be awarded to approximately eight community colleges to administer the program on their campuses. Details and applications, which are due April 7, are available on the Foundation's Web site at www.foundationccc.org.

Studies indicate that as many as 50 percent of emancipated foster youth become homeless, have serious money problems, or are incarcerated. To better prepare them for independence, YESS-California helps current and former foster youth successfully transition into self-sufficiency and adulthood through mentoring, tutoring and life-skills training. Developed in 2007, the program is a collaboration of the Foundation for California Community Colleges and the California Department of Social Services.

“Many of the 4,000 California foster youth who become independent each year lack the necessary skills to support themselves, underscoring the need for programs such as YESS-California,” said Foundation President and CEO, Dr. Paul Lanning. “The grants we are offering will allow us to intensify services to foster youth throughout the state.”

Youth are introduced to YESS-California through campus outreach and from referrals from county agencies and other local partners. Participants receive individual attention from program staff, mentors, and tutors, and are connected to resources and opportunities on campus and in the community. In addition, they engage in life-skills training and further enhance their self-sufficiency by working towards a college degree or technical certificate and obtaining gainful employment.

The program brings together joint resources of college campuses and surrounding communities to provide services that address the specific concerns foster youth face at different points along their path to independence. A sister program, YESS-LA, currently operates on nine community college campuses in Los Angeles as a joint effort of the Foundation and the LA Department of Children and Family Services.

Recipients of the YESS-California grants are expected to be announced in late May.

The Foundation for California Community Colleges is the official, non-profit auxiliary to the California Community Colleges' Board of Governors, Chancellor, and System 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. For more information, visit www.foundationccc.org.

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