



NEW CAAL REPORT URGES NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY SYSTEM FOR ADULTS

NEWS RELEASE – Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2005, **New York, NY**. There are not enough young people in the educational "pipeline" to fill the nation's workforce needs in the decades to come. Thus, it is essential to focus more attention and resources on the three million adult education students in the system and the 30 to 50 million other adults with low basic skills. A National Opportunity System for Adults, built on stronger links between adult education and community colleges, is needed urgently, and will benefit the nation and all parties involved.

With this as its core challenge, the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) today released its pioneering new report, **TO ENSURE AMERICA'S FUTURE: BUILDING A NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY SYSTEM FOR ADULTS**.

The 102-page report is an in-depth study of adult education and community colleges and the critical need to strengthen links between the two. It urges education leaders and government policymakers to accept the challenge "as a chance for strategic, forward-looking statecraft." The report is the result of two years of work by CAAL, which was guided throughout by a distinguished national task force. It presents the rationale and specific recommendations for creating the National Opportunity System for Adults that America needs.

"The gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in American society is growing, and the main pathway for the education and training needed to hold decent jobs and function well as parents and citizens is through the community college door," the report states. Although this has long been the case, it warns that we are now at a critical juncture. "We ignore present realities at our own peril. We can't afford to keep doing business as usual. A growing number of adults lack a high school credential. Too few adults are enrolled in ABE, ESL, and GED or other diploma programs, and too few are making the transition to community colleges." We are reaching only about three million adults with current programs, out of 30 to 50 million adults with low basic skills, and service and planning efforts are fragmented and underfunded.

"The adult education and literacy system and community colleges [which already collaborate more than is realized] will have to find new ways to work together toward a common goal _ by developing transitions and in the many other ways discussed in the report _ if the National Opportunity System for Adults is to become a reality." Creating this System is essential to the effective functioning of our democracy, the report says, and the United States needs it to remain globally competitive.

TO ENSURE AMERICA'S FUTURE contains a seven-page Executive Summary and detailed recommendations for state and federal government, community colleges, and the adult education system. To help implement the report's findings, CAAL will make presentations to various national and state stakeholder groups over the next several months. Its task force members will remain on as a standing advisory committee to CAAL and will do follow-up work with their own constituencies.

Gail Spangenberg (CAAL founder and president), Byron McClenney (community college leader and task force chair), and Forrest Chisman (CAAL vice president and project study director) were the project's three principals. Other task force members were Bob Bickerton, Hunter Boylan, JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall, Sarah Hawker, Lennox McLendon, Patricia Rickard, Gerardo de los Santos, and Sharlene Walker. Dozens of other organizations and people also contributed to the study. CAAL is deeply indebted to them. We are especially grateful to the project funders: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., the Ford Foundation, Verizon, Inc., the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Nellie-Mae Foundation, Household International, and Harold W. McGraw, Jr.

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