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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

MAYOR NEWSOM AND BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION
ANNOUNCE SAN FRANCISCO ONE OF FOUR U.S. CITIES TO RECEIVE
$3 MILLION GRANT TO IMPROVE COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

San Francisco, CA—Mayor Gavin Newsom today announced that San Francisco is one of four U.S. cities awarded a $3 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the National League of Cities to fund innovative proposals to boost college completion rates. The grants are part of the Communities Learning in Partnership initiative, which is led by the National League of Cities’ Institute for Youth, Education and Families.

The City and County of San Francisco, City College of San Francisco (CCSF), and the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) will receive $3 million over the next three years to align expectations between high school and college, strengthen data systems, and coordinate student services. Last year, the City, CCSF, and SFUSD created the “Bridge to Success” partnership that brought together the Mayor’s Office, SFUSD and CCSF leaders to devise new ways of helping more students successfully complete an education beyond high school. Implementing those steps and achieving those benchmarks will be the focus of the grant-funded effort.

“San Francisco has forged new and exciting partnerships with our public schools and community colleges to guarantee universal pre-school, universal afterschool programs, and a place in our colleges for every child,” said Mayor Newsom. “With this prestigious grant from the Gates Foundation, we will help bridge the graduation gap and ensure our students are ‘college ready’ and ‘career ready’ so that they not only get a good education but a place in the 21st century workforce.”

“Our school district is determined to make sure our students are graduating college ready,” said Superintendent Carlos Garcia. “We have instituted new graduation requirements to align with the required coursework for any California state university and we have expanded college and career preparedness curriculum starting in 9th grade. There is still a long way to go and we only get there working together. Our partnership with the Mayor’s Office and City College is going strong and will now be even stronger as a result of this grant from the Gates Foundation.”

Community colleges are critical to economic development because they offer affordable training and degrees to local residents. Indeed, across the country, enrollment is at an all-time high as students and displaced workers seek an edge in a tight job market. Yet history shows that less than one-quarter of students earn a degree within three years. Students today often face multiple challenges, including not being academically ready for college-level work, juggling school and family responsibilities, or working full time while attending classes.

For San Francisco, the numbers are stark. As part of the planning process to create for Bridge to Success, CCSF and SFUSD studied a cohort of high school students who were freshman in 2004 and tracked their progress into
their second year of college. The “success rate” of these students—the proportion that remained in college—was 27%.

“We thank the Gates Foundation for this opportunity to strengthen partnerships and collaborate closely to double the number of students who are completing their post-secondary degrees. Focusing on student success and completion throughout the whole educational process will promise the next generation a rewarding role in the workplace of the 21st century,” said CCSF Chancellor, Dr. Don Q. Griffin.

The City, CCSF, and SFUSD are committed to increasing graduation and retention rates for San Francisco high school graduates, setting them on a timely track to transfer to four-year institutions on-time and full-time. The goal is to double the number of low-income students who receive a post-secondary degree over the next 10 years. 49 percent of SFUSD 9th graders graduate high school and the goal by 2020 is for a 90 percent graduation rate. Currently, 70 percent of SFUSD graduates enroll in post secondary education, and by 2020, the goal is for 90 percent. Today, 54 percent of SFUSD college attendees complete a degree by the age of 26, and by 2020, the goal is for 75 percent.

“We know that in today’s economic climate and labor market, a high school diploma is no longer enough,” said Allan Golston, president of the U.S. Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “We must not only ensure that young people have access to college; we must ensure that they go on to complete college and earn a degree or certificate with value in the workplace.”

According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the U.S. labor market will be short 3 million college-educated workers over the next eight years unless there is a dramatic increase in the number of young adults who successfully complete college. The mayors of the four cities receiving grants today recognize increasing completion rates requires the coordinated efforts of government agencies, higher education institutions, community groups, and the private sector.

San Francisco joined three other cities that received today’s grants: Riverside, CA, Mesa, AZ and New York City, NY. Over the next three years, these grants will support efforts to coordinate and streamline the guidance and services young people need to get into, and through, college.

**Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

**The National League of Cities**

The National League of Cities is the nation’s oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. For more information, visit [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org).

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