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Fellowship for Journalists Focusing on Community Colleges Offered by Hechinger Institute at Teachers College, Columbia

NEW YORK, NY December 8, 2006 – The Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media announces the creation of a new, \$7,500 journalism fellowship to encourage and support in-depth coverage of the mission and work of the nation’s 1,157 community colleges. Six journalists will be chosen for the fellowship based on the submission of a plan for an ambitious reporting project. Experts from the Community College Research Center will share their expertise and act as a resource for the journalists.

In addition to the stipend, the journalists selected also will be awarded transportation to New York City, housing for two seminars, and a per diem to cover meals and other expenses. They will get a chance to discuss emerging issues facing community colleges, meet with top experts, visit community colleges in the New York area and discuss coverage issues with a panel of editors and journalism educators, who will provide one-on-one help with the project. To be part of the second group, journalists will need to write an essay that demonstrates an interest in covering community college issues but will not have to submit a reporting plan and will not receive the stipend.

The fellowship is aimed at U.S.-based print and broadcast reporters, online writers and editorial writers. The application deadline for the fellowships is April 30, 2007. A

week-long series of seminars will be held in New York City in late September 2007 and a shorter seminar will occur in February 2008.

“We want to help journalists to find the many great stories that are unfolding on community college campuses and then give them the support and encouragement to tell those stories,” said Hechinger Institute director Richard Lee Colvin. He said good journalism can chronicle the challenges community colleges are facing in adapting to the needs of a changing population, and also can put pressure on these institutions to change and improve more rapidly.

“Our mission is neither to tout community colleges nor to condemn them,” Colvin said. “Rather, it is to help journalists tell the terrific stories yet to be told about this uniquely American educational enterprise.”

Fellows who receive the stipend will do all they can to make sure their work is aired or published, preferably in the news organizations where they work.

The 1,157 community colleges that operate in all 50 states educate more than 10 million students, or 46 percent of the college undergraduates in the U.S. Despite this critical mission, media coverage of community colleges is limited. They are mentioned as fall-back options or steppingstones, way stations on the road to a real education for those too poor or too scattered to attempt something more ambitious. Rarely are community colleges scrutinized when they fail their students. Nor are they praised when they fulfill their many competing roles successfully with limited resources – by nurturing success, supporting effort, spreading opportunity and instilling hope.

Support for the first year of the fellowship comes from the Lumina Foundation for Education.

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About the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media:

The mission of the institute is to promote fair, accurate and insightful coverage of education issues from pre-kindergarten through graduate school. The Institute seeks to help education journalists develop all aspects of their craft, from writing and reporting to increasing their knowledge of the many facets of education policy and research. The Institute's primary mechanism for helping reporters develop this knowledge and skill is two- to three-day seminars held at Teachers College, Columbia University, and other locales across the country. These seminars connect the nation's leading education journalists with the country's leading education experts, to will help enliven and deepen coverage. The Institute also publishes a range of materials for journalists. The Institute is supported by a number of national foundations, including The Broad Foundation Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and The Wallace Foundation.