



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2012

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RIVERSIDE LEADERS KICK OFF RCC TWO-YEAR COMPLETION GUARANTEE TO RAISE COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

RIVERSIDE, CA – (May 7, 2012) – Today, Mayor Ron Loveridge and Completion Counts, a citywide partnership of education, civic and business leaders, kicked off the Riverside City College two-year completion guarantee, which looks to boost college access and success for local youth. Students at Norte Vista High School gathered in their gymnasium to learn about the new citywide initiative as high school graduation approaches.

The guarantee assures that eligible 2012 graduates of Alvord and Riverside Unified School Districts get priority class registration at RCC and a seat in classes to help them earn an associates degree, or transfer to a four-year university, within two years of enrolling.

The RCC two-year guarantee is part of an ambitious effort led by Completion Counts to raise the number of Riverside students who enroll and graduate from college by 2020. The partnership is driven by the City of Riverside, Riverside City College, Alvord Unified School District, Riverside Unified School District, Riverside County Office of Education, UC Riverside, and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce.

California's budget cuts to education are driving community colleges to make changes to address the specific needs of their campus and community, while still making higher education accessible to everyone. Through Completion Counts, RCC is now focusing its efforts to give priority to eligible local incoming students, whom are overwhelmingly the first in their families to go to college.

"We know that for some of you right now college is just a dream, but we've been working very hard to make college a real possibility," said Board President of Riverside Unified School District Gayle Cloud to a packed gymnasium. "This kind of collaboration between K-12 and higher education is unheard of in many communities – but we're making it happen here in Riverside," she said.

Dr. Cynthia Azari, President of Riverside City College presented the details of the guarantee. To participate, students must meet certain criteria including: score high in a college-entrance English and math test, complete the 2012-13 Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), attend full-time and maintain a 2.0 GPA at RCC. The guarantee does not apply at the Moreno Valley or Norco colleges.

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The citywide partnership is about more than access and success at RCC. For example, high school math and English teachers are now joining forces with college professors. They are aligning curriculum and lesson plans to get students ready for college-level work. Students will reap the benefits when they don't have to take "catch-up" courses that don't count towards a degree – saving them time and money.

High school guidance counselors are also working with student advisors at the college level to decide on the best ways to groom students for college. That means students receive the most accurate and up-to-date information about college-prep classes, college admissions, and financial aid requirements.

"We will continue encouraging our students to take 'A-G' courses in high school. Those fifteen classes ensure that students graduate ready for college-level work, and with essential skills for a career," said Brian Hawley, Chairman of the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce.

"We will also continue working with our legislators, advocating for a stabilized budget that protects the quality of our schools, and ensures that this new generation of students has the tools to succeed," said Hawley.

Completion Counts is confident that through its collaborative efforts it will raise college graduation rates among Riverside youth. By 2020 their goal is:

- 90% of high school students will graduate (compared to 79%)
- 62% of students will go on to college (compared to 42%)
- 42% of students who start at a 2-year college will complete or transfer (compared to 14%)
- 72% of students who start at a 4-year college will complete their degree (compared to 66%)

"I want to personally acknowledge their innovation and courage to finding real solutions that our students can count on," said Mayor Loveridge about the work of the partnership. "Our shared vision is that all of our students can have an outstanding quality of life, made possible through higher education," Loveridge concluded.

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Completion Counts is Riverside's partnership working to raise college graduation rates. The citywide initiative is driven by the City of Riverside, Riverside City College, Alvord Unified School District, Riverside Unified School District, Riverside County Office of Education, UC Riverside and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce to make a college degree an attainable goal for every Riverside student. More information at www.CompletionCounts.org