



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Heather Doe
515-725-3417
515-975-6769 cell
heather.doe@iowa.gov

Ottumwa Receives \$10,000 Planning Grant From Iowa College Aid
Grant funds local efforts in Iowa communities to increase college attainment

Des Moines, IA, April 14, 2015 – The Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) today announced that United Way of Wapello County was awarded a \$10,000 Planning Grant to support efforts to increase the college attainment rate in Ottumwa as part of the agency’s “College Changes Everything” initiative.

This grant will enable United Way of Wapello County, working with the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, to conduct strategic planning aimed at organizing and initiating a community-based local college access network (LCAN) dedicated to increasing college attainment among Ottumwa students.

“The ‘College Changes Everything’ initiative aims to help communities like Ottumwa build a civic infrastructure that supports a comprehensive cradle-to-career educational system, rather than a lot of unconnected programs,” said Iowa College Aid Executive Director Karen Misjak.

Ottumwa was awarded the grant, said Misjak, based on demonstrated need and a clear plan for working across private and public sectors to develop baseline measures for key educational indicators. At 26 percent, the adult population in Ottumwa with an associate’s degree or higher is significantly lower than the state’s, which is 37 percent. By 2020, it is estimated that close to 70 percent of all jobs in Iowa will require educational degrees or credentials beyond high school.

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“We want to improve the percentage of people who attend and graduate from college and also get certified in many of the programs offered by our community colleges,” said Ottumwa Mayor Tom Lazio. “Not only does the additional education and training increase earning power, it provides more opportunity for people to live and work in rural Iowa.”

The grant will allow community leaders to focus on increasing the percentage of 18 – 24 year olds who enter postsecondary education and vocational programs, said Desiree Johnson, President and CEO, United Way of Wapello County, adding “we will be able complete a landscape scan of current programs and identify gaps or barriers to accessing college or vocational programs.”

Kelly Genners, Director of Community Leadership & Grant-Making for the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, sees the planning grant as “an important first step in developing a truly collaborative effort around raising education attainment in our area, which aligns perfectly with Legacy’s commitment to education.”

Iowa College Aid’s ‘College Changes Everything’ initiative has adopted Goal 2025, a goal set by the Lumina foundation, which aims to increase the number of students receiving high-value educational degrees to 60 percent by 2025. Initiatives such as ‘College Changes Everything’ play critical roles in achieving this goal by mobilizing communities and increasing the visibility and impact of collaborative work to increase higher educational attainment.

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About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa’s students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$70.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education’s College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR-UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa’s students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.