March 17, 2008

For Immediate Release: March 17, 2008

Contact: Kimberly Gormley, Director, Marketing & Communications, 614.947.3504 (Office) or 614.668.2854 (Mobile)

Ohio College Access Network to help communities keep disadvantaged kids in college

Columbus, Ohio – This month the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) launched a new phase of college retention grants to help low-income or first-generation students served by the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence and the Stark Education Partnership not only pursue education beyond high school but also stay in college to earn a degree.

While college enrollment is at an all-time high, far too many students who enter the higher education system drop out before earning a degree. According to the US Department of Education’s Beginning Postsecondary Study, only about four in 10 students who begin full-time at a four-year college get a bachelor’s degree within four years and only about six out of 10 get a degree within six years. Graduation rates are even worse for those seeking a bachelor’s degree that begins in a two-year college. At both two-year and four-year institutions, completion rates are substantially lower for minority students from low-income families, according to a report from The Education Trust.

With financial support from Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation, OCAN is working to level the playing field for students in communities across Ohio. Post-secondary institutions in Allen, Belmont and Washington counties have already made great strides toward retaining students beyond their first year of college. OCAN is proud to expand upon their work by awarding additional funding to support college retention services in Adams, Brown, Clinton, Highland, Fayette, Stark and their surrounding counties.

To help students earn degrees, the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence will create and distribute a directory highlighting local resources, hire a College Success Advisor to work one-on-one with students who miss class regularly, and form groups of senior high school students who plan to attend Southern State Community College in hopes they will support one another through college visits, orientation and even classes. The Stark Education Partnership will implement a re-grant process to colleges in Stark County that focus on meaningful remedial coursework completion as well as building an appropriate curriculum for first-year students so they complete at least 20 credits.

“Collaboration amongst community organizations and post-secondary institutions is a necessity if we want all students, especially disadvantaged students, to enter and complete education beyond high school. Studies show that individuals who obtain a bachelor’s degree will earn 86 percent more than high school graduates over a lifetime and those who start college but do not complete a degree will earn only 10 percent more than those with a high school degree,” said Dr. Reginald Wilkinson, OCAN President and CEO.

For more information about college access programs or retention services in your area please visit www.OhioCan.org or http://www.ohiocan.org/.

###

The Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) was founded in 1999, by KnowledgeWorks Foundation, in collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Business Roundtable. OCAN works to establish college access programs across the state and is the first statewide coordinating body for college access programs in the nation. The goal of the organization is to help more Ohio students pursue postsecondary education through the work of local college access programs, which provide financial aid advising, last dollar grants, career guidance, and other services. Currently, 36 college access programs serve nearly 200 of Ohio’s 612 school districts, and 17 private/parochial schools in 46 counties touching nearly 175,000 students annually.