

## USA Funds Promotes Success Among California Community College Students

Approximately 50 percent of all first-time students in the California community college system drop out within one year. Additionally, assessments across that state indicate the majority of new freshmen are underprepared for college-level math and English and have a low probability of successfully completing transfer-level math and English courses.

To combat these issues, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has developed a system-wide long-term strategic plan. The plan focuses on the following key areas:

- ◆ College awareness and access.
- ◆ Student success and readiness.
- ◆ Partnerships for economic and work force development.
- ◆ System effectiveness.
- ◆ Resource development.

“Developing solutions for underprepared students is critical for the academic success of community college students, and imperative in light of our community college missions, including career training, transfer to four-year institutions and lifelong learning,” says Carole Bogue-Feinour, vice chancellor, academic affairs, California Community Colleges.

USA Funds® awarded a \$103,000 grant to the Foundation for California Community Colleges to support this plan. The grant has helped fund research and conferences about issues confronting community colleges in California, particularly the issue of bolstering student retention and ensuring students’ academic preparedness for college.

The CCC helped form a group to examine how students learn, and what teaching methodologies, strategies and support structures best promote learning in basic skills courses. The group also reviewed successful practices in basic skills programs from other community colleges throughout the nation.



Joann Jelly, left, of Barstow Community College, receives the USA Funds Retention Award from Diane Woodruff of California Community Colleges.

Once research was complete, the steering committee for professional development organized 20 regional workshops throughout the state to share the information and conclusions gleaned from the study. The workshops aimed to help ensure successful adoption and implementation of programs deemed most effective.

“We are pleased thus far with our accomplishments that are giving us guidance to future steps. We have a great deal of enthusiasm throughout the system, and everyone is on board to see this project through to success,” says Bogue-Feinour. “The USA Funds grant supported our initial efforts, and we are now moving forward to significantly increase the success of our students.”

### Rewarding retention efforts

USA Funds also established the USA Funds Retention Award to recognize a faculty member's work to increase student success. Joann Jelly, psychology instructor at Barstow Community College in California, received the award for her studies and work in ensuring greater retention and success of BCC students.

A higher education instructor for more than 22 years, Jelly noted that many community college students are first-generation students and therefore lack role models. “Sometimes they limit themselves by their own stereotypes,” she says. “The more we can help students build their ability to believe in themselves, the more the students will try.”

Kyle Malone, USA Funds manager, access and outreach, says, “USA Funds is pleased to support the California Community Colleges System as it works to increase the success of community college students. That work, along with several other USA Funds-sponsored initiatives, is having a positive effect on California students.”

USA Funds also partners with a variety of other organizations that are working to enhance postsecondary education preparedness, access and success for students in California. Among those organizations are the following:

### Tomás Rivera Policy Institute

USA Funds supports annual education conferences conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute and its work to enhance postsecondary access and success for California students, especially Latino students. TRPI takes innovative approaches to its research, providing information about the effects of policy decisions, changing demographics and the progress of the integration

*Continued on page 4*



Students from California State University, Long Beach listen to a presentation at the USA Funds-sponsored 2007 Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Educational Conference.

# Selected grants awarded by USA Funds Oct. 1, 2007–Dec. 31, 2007

USA Funds awards grants to advance its nonprofit mission to enhance postsecondary education preparedness, access and success.

## Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center Inc.

Indianapolis

**Project** Learning Communities Initiative, George Washington Community School  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$150,819

The national Learning Communities initiative strives to significantly increase the number of local youth in six communities — including the George Washington Community School area — who complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education.

## American Indian College Fund

Denver

**Project** Scholarships  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

The mission of the American Indian College Fund is to raise scholarship funds for American-Indian students at qualified tribal colleges and universities and to generate awareness of those institutions. USA Funds supports this effort through its annual donation to the organization's scholarship fund.

## Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

**Project** Scholarships  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

USA Funds' annual donation to HSF provides financial assistance to college students. HSF strives to double the rate of Hispanic students earning college degrees by providing scholarships and education outreach support to the Latino community.

## United Negro College Fund

Fairfax, Va.

**Project** Scholarships  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

This annual grant to UNCF's general scholarship fund provides financial aid to deserving students. UNCF provides operating funds and technology enhancement services for 39 member Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and scholarships and internships for students at almost 1,000 institutions.

## Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

Reno, Nev.

**Project** College Access in Clark County  
**Geographic Scope** Nevada  
**Amount** \$100,000

In collaboration with the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the Nevada System of Higher Education will develop a research paper aimed at understanding why many Nevada residents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are not enrolling and persisting in college.

## DE-DC-MD Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Inc.

Rosedale, Md.

**Project** 2007 College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$65,000

USA Funds' grant covers expenses associated with College Goal Sunday 2008 in Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia. The event provides parents and students with free assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, required for federal aid as well as for many state and institutional student aid programs.

## Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

Washington, D.C.

**Project** Scholarships  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds provides financial assistance for need-based students through this scholarship donation to APIASF. This national organization promotes higher education of Asian and Pacific-Islander Americans by distributing scholarships for qualified students going to college.

## Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Wichita, Kan.

**Project** Kansas College Goal Sunday 2007  
**Geographic Scope** Kansas  
**Amount** \$50,000

This funding supported College Goal Sunday 2008 in Kansas. College Goal Sunday provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Jackson, Miss.

**Project** GEAR UP Milestone Awards  
**Geographic Scope** Mississippi  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds partners with the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning to support postsecondary education scholarships for GEAR UP students in Mississippi. GEAR UP Mississippi works to encourage students to set high academic expectations, stay in school, study hard, and take courses that will prepare them to enter and succeed in college.

## Nevada Public Education Foundation

Carson City, Nev.

**Project** Nevada ACCESS  
**Geographic Scope** Nevada  
**Amount** \$50,000

Nevada ACCESS: Academics + Careers + College and/or Training Equal Student Success events encourage and motivate students to pursue postsecondary education. The Nevada Public Education Foundation will host the events during the 2007-2008 academic year.

## Indiana Dollars for Scholars

Indianapolis

**Project** 2008 Hoosier Heroes  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$48,000

Hoosier Heroes provides Indiana students an opportunity to identify Indiana citizens who have made significant contributions to society. High school juniors and seniors may nominate their own Hoosier Heroes. USA Funds' grant includes funding for 20 scholarships to be awarded to select students who write nomination essays.

## Maryland Higher Education Commission

Annapolis, Md.

**Project** College Planning Calendar and Spanish Translation  
**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$39,000

This 16-month calendar, distributed to all Maryland high school juniors, provides tips and important dates to remember in the college admission and financial aid process.

## Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

Phoenix

**Project** Developing Arizona's Human Capital: Addressing Today's Postsecondary Challenges Conference  
**Geographic Scope** Arizona  
**Amount** \$35,000

This conference provided a forum for legislators, policy-makers, and assorted stakeholders in the Arizona postsecondary system to address concerns about postsecondary education policy.

## Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

Phoenix

**Project** College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Arizona  
**Amount** \$35,000

This funding supported College Goal Sunday 2008 in Arizona. College Goal Sunday provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Foundation for Florida's Community Colleges

Tallahassee, Fla.

**Project** College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Florida  
**Amount** \$33,500

USA Funds supported Florida's 2008 College Goal Sunday, which provided free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Central Wyoming Community College

Riverton, Wyo.

**Project** College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Wyoming  
**Amount** \$33,000

This funding supported College Goal Sunday 2008 in Wyoming. College Goal Sunday provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

# USA Funds Employee Plays Key Role in Helping Students, Families Get Aid for College

USA Funds staffer Terri Cooley has a special commitment to a program that helps families apply for financial aid for higher education. For the almost 20 years that the program has been in place, Cooley has volunteered for Indiana's College Goal Sunday.

Completing the application necessary to qualify for financial aid can be a daunting task. The paperwork and length of the form can be a challenge, especially for those who never have been through the process. At College Goal Sunday, volunteers aim to ease the process of applying for financial aid for college by teaching students and their families about the various forms of financial aid and providing assistance with completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

"When I first heard about College Goal Sunday, it just sounded like a neat event to be involved with," says Cooley. "The FAFSA can be so confusing, so this was an opportunity to help these kids, who absolutely need financial aid for higher education, attain their dreams of attending college."

For the past five years, Cooley has served as a College Goal Sunday site coordinator at Arlington High School in Indianapolis. Volunteers at that site typically assist approximately 200 students each year. Since its inception in 1989, Indiana's College Goal Sunday has assisted more than 70,000 Indiana residents.

As a College Goal Sunday site coordinator, Cooley is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers, ordering all materials, handling last-minute details and ensuring the day's event runs smoothly.

Cooley has many years of experience in the student loan program, starting with USA Funds in 1985. Initially Cooley was hired to process loan applications. In 1997 she assumed her current role as an investigations specialist; she works to resolve cases in which forgery, incorrect Social Security numbers and false certification are alleged.

Her in-depth knowledge of the student loan program has made her an asset to those she assists at College Goal Sunday.

"The students and their families truly benefit from Terri's knowledge of financial aid," says Pat Roe, USA Funds special assistant to the president and College Goal Sunday volunteer. "The key to volunteerism is commitment and dependability, and that is Terri. She is so personable and patient in answering questions, and has everything well-organized so everything runs smoothly."

USA Funds helps fund Indiana's College Goal Sunday. In 2008 USA Funds also supported College Goal Sunday programs in Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Wyoming and Washington, D.C.

## Commitment to UNCF

Cooley's commitment to helping others also extends to the Indianapolis-area United Negro College Fund. For the past four years, she and co-worker Karen Reese have served as co-chairs of the volunteer committee for UNCF's annual fund-raising event. UNCF is the nation's oldest minority education assistance organization.

Cooley is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers for all aspects of the local UNCF fund-raiser and being present the night of the event to answer any questions.

"Terri is not only a wonderful UNCF volunteer, she also represents what USA Funds stands for, an organization that is committed to assisting at all levels," says Andrea Neeley, area development director, UNCF. "She is a keeper."



Terri Cooley, left, of USA Funds, assists Anne Odea at the 2008 College Goal Sunday in Indianapolis.

*"This was an opportunity to help these kids, who absolutely need financial aid for higher education, attain their dreams of attending college."*

— Terri Cooley, USA Funds employee and College Goal Sunday volunteer



Cooley, center, assists Nikki Tyler, left, and Ronnie Tyler in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at College Goal Sunday.

Photos by Brent Smith

# Need for Developmental Education Critical in California Community Colleges

By Carole Bogue-Feinour  
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
California Community Colleges

The board of governors for the California Community Colleges has consistently recognized that providing underprepared students with opportunity to increase performance levels in English as a Second Language and basic skills is an essential function of the system. In fact, the community college mission statement identifies basic skills instruction and services as “essential functions.”

As open access institutions, the California Community Colleges address the needs of more than 2.6 million, highly diverse students, the majority of whom need to increase performance levels in developmental reading, writing or mathematics. Effectively serving students who need one or more courses in ESL or basic skills is a key to leading students to career technical education, academic program and degree completion, and transfer.

With success in college course work, students will be able to enter the work force and fill the high-wage, high-skilled positions that require adequate knowledge and appropriate levels of basic skills and technological proficiency, or transfer to four-year institutions prior to joining the workplace. Investment in underprepared students, then, contributes significantly to the California Community Colleges’ economic development mission and to California’s long-term social and economic health. The community college system’s 2006 Strategic Plan indicates that providing effective basic skills is essential to serving as a gateway to opportunity and success for entering students.

## Focusing on equity

Additionally, a recent report prepared for the board of governors in January noted that, for the 2006-2007 academic year, nearly 70

percent of students who enrolled in ESL or basic skills courses in California Community Colleges were students of diversity. The report also noted that a greater percentage of Hispanic students took ESL and basic skills courses than did students of other diverse groups. While contributing to the state’s social and economic well-being, the community colleges must seek to achieve educational equity and lead these students to increased performance levels in ESL and basic skills required for successful completion of college-level courses.

The California Community Colleges clearly recognize the importance of addressing the needs of developmental education students and of providing them the most effective instruction and support possible. Since fall 2006, the entire system has been engaged in focusing on improvement in ESL and basic skills, through close collaboration of the chief instructional officers, chief student services officers, statewide academic senate and the chancellor’s office.

*“Investment in underprepared students contributes significantly to the California Community Colleges’ economic development mission and to California’s long-term social and economic health.”*

## Transforming community colleges

Initial work in this project included conducting a comprehensive review of the literature and effective practices. A professional development grant assisted in organizing conferences, workshops and events that engaged all 109 colleges in studying literature, analyzing effective practices, and developing action and expenditure plans. The system has redirected funds in its budget to ESL and basic skills, in support of the colleges’ implementation of their action plan activities.

In 2007-2008, the chancellor’s office issued a \$1.6 million dollar grant to build on earlier professional development activities and again redirected funds to the colleges’ ESL and basic skills efforts.

Ultimately, the goal is to transform the California Community Colleges in how they serve incoming students, most of whom do need to improve performance in ESL or basic skills required for reaching designated educational and occupational goals.

## USA Funds Promotes Success

*Continued from page 1*

of Latinos across the nation. The annual education conferences bring together more than 600 administrators, program directors, teachers, researchers and public policy-makers to focus on the issue of increasing Latino college application, enrollment and graduation rates.

## Puente Project

The Puente Project serves 33 high schools and 58 community colleges throughout California. The initiative aims to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students who enroll in four-year colleges, earn degrees and return

to the community as mentors and leaders of future generations.

A \$50,000 grant from USA Funds helped to support the project, specifically its community leadership and mentoring components. The grant supported two ninth grade leadership conferences focused on exploring the concepts of mentoring and community, how to access networks to become resourceful in academic and career settings, how to be exposed to a variety of career options, and developing leadership skills.

## Steps to Success

The Barrio Logan College Institute promotes the pursuit of higher education for first-generation students through after-school programs beginning in the third grade. A grant from USA Funds supported the BLCI Steps to Success Program for High School Students. Students participate in weekly grade level meetings where activities provide assistance in preparing for college admissions tests, finding financial aid for college, and selecting postsecondary schools.