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Twenty-Seven Organizations Call On U.S. Higher Education to Demonstrate Student Learning

Washington, D.C. – U.S. colleges and universities must ensure that college degrees reflect a high level of student achievement and commit to publicly reporting evidence of student learning. These principles are the centerpiece of a new publication, endorsed by 27 national higher education organizations, that calls on colleges and universities to ask and answer the question, “Are students learning?” at their institutions.

Committing to Quality: Guidelines for Assessment and Accountability, published by the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, guides colleges and universities in improving the quality of a college degree. It asks colleges to take responsibility for assessing and improving student learning — to set clear goals for student achievement, regularly gather and use evidence that measures performance against those goals, report evidence of student learning, and continuously work to improve results. It will be released today at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation’s (CHEA) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

"The endorsement of these guidelines by national organizations sends a clear message that higher education will speak with one voice and embrace evidence-based improvement of student learning." said David Paris, executive director of the Alliance. "We urge all those in college and university communities— presidents and chancellors, faculty members, academic and student affairs administrators— to share and discuss these principles and, ultimately, to put them into practice."

“The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) endorsed these guidelines because using evidence to improve learning is an integral part of the national agenda for improving achievement and completion, particularly for underserved and nontraditional populations,” said Michelle Cooper, president of IHEP. “Colleges and universities need to demonstrate that all students are learning and *Committing to Quality* encourages this.”

U.S. higher education must focus on both quantity and quality—increasing graduation rates and the learning represented in the degree. Awarding more degrees will only be meaningful if those degrees reflect a high level of student accomplishment. Those granting educational credentials must assure that students have developed the requisite knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that prepare them for work, life, and responsible citizenship.

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A free copy of *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for Assessment and Accountability* is available at http://www.newleadershipalliance.org/what_we_do/committing_to_quality/.

The New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability envisions a self-directed, professional higher education community that produces an increasing number of college graduates with high quality degrees in preparation for work, life, and responsible citizenship. Established in 2009, it is an advocacy-focused organization leading and supporting voluntary and cooperative efforts to move the higher education community towards gathering, reporting on, and using evidence to improve student learning in U.S. undergraduate education. Through the promotion of shared principles, recommended actions, and innovative initiatives, the Alliance aims to shape attitudes, practices, and policies related to gathering, reporting on, and using evidence to improve student learning; to promote the establishment of new professional norms in these areas; and to increase public confidence in the quality of undergraduate education provided by U.S. colleges and universities. The work of the Alliance is supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and The Teagle Foundation.