



For Immediate Release
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California Dropout Research Project Launched to Study and Develop Solutions to the State's High School Dropout Crisis

Santa Barbara, Calif. – With California facing dramatic increases in high school dropout rates in recent years, a new University of California-based program announced today that it is launching a comprehensive statewide effort to conduct new research and synthesize existing research with the aim of shaping effective public policy to address the growing crisis.

The California Dropout Research Project (CDRP), based at the Gevirtz School at University of California, Santa Barbara, will issue a series of policy reports and briefs starting in June of 2007. The effort will stress the urgent need to develop California-focused research that takes into account the demographic realities of the state and assesses the effectiveness of intervention programs.

“The economic and social welfare of the state is at risk,” said Professor Russell W. Rumberger, director of CDRP and one of the nation’s leading researchers on high school dropouts. “We know little about the educational, economic and social costs of dropouts in California. That’s why we need new research that looks at the unique aspects of the crisis in California.”

The project will focus on four fundamental dimensions of the dropout crisis:

- Measure dropout rates with new data for precise estimates
- Examine the economic and social costs of dropouts

- Study both long-term and short-term causes
- Recommend interventions and policy responses

CDRP will issue a series of research reports and statistical briefs beginning in June. The first report will address the social costs of dropouts in California. The CDRP Policy Committee, which includes educators, policymakers, elected officials, activists and researchers, will issue its final report with a set of policy recommendations in January 2008.

The crisis is staggering in many respects. For example, based on figures from the California Department of Education there were 500,000 students enrolled in the ninth grade in 2001-02 and 355,000 who graduated four years later, meaning that 145,000 students either dropped out or did not graduate on time in the class of 2005.

According to California State Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), a member of the CDRP's Policy Committee and chair of the State Senate Select Committee on High School Graduation, "We need this research now more than ever. It will inform us about why so many students are dropping out and what can be done to prevent it. I believe this is the most pressing education issue for the state and this project will help us identify solutions."

CDRP's new research will tackle areas not adequately covered by existing research. The new studies will include a profile of high school dropouts and graduates that will help identify knowable characteristics of potential dropouts. Another will employ recent data to examine student and school predictors of high school graduation in California. A third new study will utilize a database of school performance indicators to identify those California high schools that beat the odds in high school graduation.

The research is being funded by \$850,000 in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation.

“Far too many young people in California abandon their education, at great cost to themselves and to society,” said Anne Stanton, Youth Program Director at The James Irvine Foundation. “This research will give us the first comprehensive look at the high school dropout crisis in California and focus on possible solutions to one of the most important issues facing our state.”

Underlining the urgent nature of the crisis, Rumberger points out that demographic trends could increase the number of dropouts: Latinos are twice as likely as whites to dropout out of school. Latino public school enrollment will increase by 18 percent in the next ten years, while White public school enrollment will decline by 18 percent. As a result, he said, “California’s dropout rate could easily increase within the decade.” Another demographic with high dropout rates is English learners—the CDRP is affiliated with the UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute, which Rumberger also directs.

“The CDRP research should not only increase our understanding of why students are dropping out in California but also provide a set of interventions we hope will more effectively support all students to meet their academic goals,” said Carol Rava Treat, deputy director of advocacy with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

For more information, please visit the CDRP website at:
<http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/>

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Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to reduce inequities and improve lives around the world. In developing countries, it focuses on improving health, reducing extreme poverty, and increasing access to technology in public libraries. In the United States, the foundation seeks to ensure that all people have access to a great education and to technology in public libraries. In its local region, it focuses on improving the lives of low-income families. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and Co-chairs William H. Gates Sr., Bill Gates, and Melinda French Gates. More information is available at www.gatesfoundation.org

The James Irvine Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, inclusive, and successful society. The foundation's grantmaking is organized around three program areas: Arts, Youth, and California Perspectives, which focuses on increasing public understanding of critical issues facing the state. Since 1937 the foundation has provided more than \$900 million in grants to over 3,000 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With current assets of more than \$1.7 billion, the foundation expects to make grants of \$75 million in 2007 for the people of California. For more information about the Irvine Foundation, please visit www.irvine.org

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The Hewlett Foundation makes grants to solve some of the most difficult social and environmental problems facing society. For more information, please visit www.hewlett.org

The Walter S. Johnson Foundation

The Foundation's grants reflect our two main goals: ensuring the well being of children and youth; and strengthening public education. By doing so, we aim to assist young people in their transition to adulthood. For more information about the Johnson Foundation, please visit: www.wsjf.org