

FOR RELEASE: Wednesday, September 27, 2006

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WW HELPS CREATE EARLY COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES AT CSU-STANISLAUS

PRINCETON, N.J.—Two new Woodrow Wilson Early College High Schools, developed with the California State University, Stanislaus and Aspire Public Schools, are making college access a real possibility in a Central Valley community where too few middle- and high-school students have seen themselves as future college students.

CSU-Stanislaus' Benjamin Holt College Preparatory Academy, which serves grades 6-12, is built on the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's Early College model. Located in Stockton—where fewer than 9% of current high school graduates qualify for admission to the University of California or the California State University system—the school enrolls approximately 450 students and will graduate its first class in June 2007.

A public charter school sponsored by the Lodi Unified School District, the Ben Holt Academy earned a 2006 nomination for California's Distinguished School Awards—an honor accorded roughly 5 percent of the state's schools—and achieved an Academic Performance Index score of 824 out of a maximum 1,000. Holt's advanced curriculum in math, science, humanities, and arts, shaped by veteran teachers and university faculty, both challenges students and accustoms them to the kind of work they will do in college. In the school's first few months, many Holt students are already taking college-level anthropology, English, technology, world languages, and mathematics. Most upperclassmen will graduate with 15 to 30 units of college credit.

"College aspirations often begin in elementary school and most assuredly at middle grades," noted Gretchen Salvetti, Ben Holt principal. The Holt campus has quickly developed a "university feel," she said, as students come to grips with college-style rigor and discover the significant advantages of earning university credits in high school. "Thinking 'College Is For Certain' definitely adds to our students' motivation," Ms. Salvetti said.

Woodrow Wilson's second Stockton Early College, Rosa Parks Academy, is another 6-12 public charter school, developed through Aspire and housed on CSU-Stanislaus' Stockton campus. Rosa Parks' first students, now fifth and sixth graders, can already envision college, according to principal Kevin Taylor, because the school temporarily shares a building with the CSU-Stanislaus nursing program and computer lab. "It's a great influence," he said, "for these students—a lot of them will be the first in their families to attend college. They see college students going to class, they see the way they relate to each other, they see the professors, and it makes college more real to them."

CSU-Stanislaus is receiving some \$670,000 in seed grants from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to work with Aspire in developing the two Stockton schools, which join California's three other Woodrow Wilson Early Colleges at Stanford, Berkeley, and Cal State-Los Angeles. The schools belong to a nationwide network of 14 Early Colleges—including sites in New York City; Hartford, Connecticut; New Orleans; and Washington, D.C.—being facilitated by Woodrow Wilson and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Launched in fall 2003, Woodrow Wilson's Early College initiative seeks to better prepare low-income and minority students for high school graduation and college success. While national early college efforts involve a range of approaches, preparation for baccalaureate-level arts and sciences study is a Woodrow Wilson signature. Robert J. Baird, vice president for school-university partnerships at the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, said, "Early College means a real shot at not only getting to college, but completing a bachelor's degree. That's the key to productive lives and careers for students who have too rarely had opportunities to excel. We're excited to do this work with CSU-Stanislaus, an institution that really sees educational success as a process of lifelong support."

For more information, see <http://www.woodrow.org/EarlyCollege>.

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The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation has its origins in a now-famous fellowship program, begun in 1945, which helped the United States create a great generation of college teachers and intellectual leaders. Today's Woodrow Wilson continues to cultivate excellence in teaching and learning at every level of education, putting the arts and sciences at the service of democracy.

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