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For Immediate Release

National Adult Learner Coalition Created to Advance Student Success

Washington, D.C., February 6th, 2017 – Today, four major associations join together as a cohesive voice advocating for adult students and the institutions that serve them. With support from Lumina Foundation, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), Presidents' Forum, and University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) are pleased to announce the National Adult Learner Coalition.

The Coalition's mission is to advance the adult learner agenda to expand post-secondary education and credentialing opportunities that will strengthen our communities, regions, and national economy. Together, the founding members represent more than 1,000 higher education institutions throughout the United States that have long been leaders and innovators in expanding opportunities for adult and contemporary learners.

The Coalition will promote policies that align post-secondary education and America's workforce development goals to produce better outcomes and access for the majority of today's students. The Coalition fills a void in the higher education policy establishment which, until now, lacked a unified voice representing the adult learner and the institutions and programs that serve them.

The Coalition's goals are to modernize federal education and workforce policy to reflect the reality that the adult learner is the new normal; educate stakeholders on the value and needs of adult learners and innovative ways to serve them; and mobilize colleges and universities, employers, government, and other key constituencies to advance the adult learner. The Coalition is also working to increase awareness of the need for support for innovative directions such as competency-based education, prior learning assessment, and alternative credentialing, which hold great promise for reaching those adults currently underserved.

The Coalition has also unveiled an important white paper, entitled "Strengthening America's Economy By Expanding Educational Opportunities for Working Adults," which outlines some of the issues facing adult learners including confusing or incomplete information, patchwork of regulations, and a need for more flexible and impactful educational offerings. The Coalition also provides examples of existing building blocks which encourage success, such as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Competency Based Education (CBE), among others. The white paper demonstrates that there are some opportunities to address these challenges and modernize the federal policy framework through expansion of Pell Grants, removal of barriers to financial aid for PLA and CBE, enhanced tax incentives for employer investment in learning, and other policies which need to be adjusted to recognize the importance of adult learners to the American workforce and international economic competitiveness.

"For more than a century, UPCEA has advocated for adult learners," said Robert Hansen, CEO, UPCEA.

“Once a small minority, adult and non-traditional learners now constitute up to 85 percent of today’s students.” “Our coalition is dedicated to help realign federal policy with this new higher education landscape, advocating for the expansion of access, innovation, and creative solutions.”

“We must invest in adult learners to meet our country’s need for skilled workers.” said Pamela Tate, President and CEO of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. “CAEL has been working for over 42 years to realize its vision of meaningful learning, credentials, and work for every adult. This coalition will help advance the adult learner agenda and we are proud to be a part of it.”

“The benefits of a college credential – better job prospects, higher wages, a healthier lifestyle – would remain unattainable for adult learners if not for the work of post-traditional institutions attuned to their unique needs,” said Tina Goodyear, COO, President’s Forum. “The President’s Forum is proud to represent a collaboration of accredited, adult-serving institutions which have embraced innovative online education practices and look forward to working with the coalition to increase the ability of adults around the globe to access a quality post-secondary education.”

“The undeniable shift in education demographics to a student community largely comprised of adult learners demands policies and programs that shift with them,” said Kathleen S. Ives, CEO and executive director of the Online Learning Consortium. “Our coalition has the potential to advocate on behalf of the new majority student in ways more powerful than any of our organizations could advocate individually. We are delighted to join in this important mission.”

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL): As a national leader, CAEL works to ensure that every adult has the opportunity for meaningful learning, credentials and employment. CAEL advocates and innovates on behalf of all adult learners, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to increase access to education and economic security and to develop and provide effective services and tools. CAEL works to enhance its thought leadership role through research, policy development, convening and direct work with adult learners, postsecondary education institutions, employers and government. Visit <http://www.cael.org/> for more information

The Online Learning Consortium (OLC): The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) is the leading professional organization devoted to advancing the quality of online learning worldwide. The member-sustained organization offers an extensive set of resources for professional development and institutional advancement of online learning, including, original research, leading-edge instruction, best-practice publications, community-driven conferences and expert guidance. OLC members include educators, administrators, trainers and other online learning professionals, as well as educational institutions, professional societies and corporate enterprises. Visit <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/> for more information.

The Presidents’ Forum: Established in 2004, The Presidents’ Forum is a collaboration of accredited, national, adult-serving institutions and programs which have embraced the power and potential of online education. The Mission of the Presidents’ Forum is to advance the recognition of innovative

practice and excellence in online learning. This is accomplished by providing a venue for leaders in higher education and stakeholders to share their knowledge and learn from others' best practices. Visit <http://www.presidentsforum.org/> for more information.

University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) is the association for leaders in professional, continuing, and online education. Founded in 1915, UPCEA now serves most of the leading public and private colleges and universities in North America. UPCEA serves its members and those in the field with innovative conferences and specialty seminars, research and benchmarking information, professional networking opportunities and timely publications. Based in Washington, D.C., UPCEA also builds greater awareness of the vital link between contemporary learners and public policy issues. Visit <http://www.upcea.edu> for more information.

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