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**West Chester University & Delaware County Community College Announce New
National “Moon Shot for Equity” Partnership to Erase Equity Gaps in College Completion**

*New regional cluster is working with EAB to help underserved student populations in
Southeastern Pennsylvania*

Delaware & Chester Counties, PA (September 15, 2021) --- As the inaugural members of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Collaborative, West Chester University & Delaware County Community College are joining a national student-success initiative, led by Washington, D.C. based education firm EAB, that is aimed at ending equity gaps in higher education by 2030. The national project has been intentionally designed to help a greater number of students from historically underserved populations, including students of color, in the Southeastern Pennsylvania region graduate from college.

Today at 4 p.m., Acting Deputy Secretary and Commissioner for Postsecondary and Higher Education Dr. Tanya I. Garcia, West Chester University President Dr. Christopher M. Fiorentino, Delaware County Community College President Dr. L. Joy Gates Black, Superintendent of William Penn School District Dr. Eric J. Beacoats, and Vice President of Partnerships at EAB Tom Sugar will share more details about the Moon Shot for Equity project. The leaders will participate in a moderated panel discussion and answer questions from the media during a press conference held at Penn Wood High School (Auditorium), 100 Green Avenue, Lansdowne, PA.

According to a study conducted by the Rand Corporation in 2015, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for students in Pennsylvania reveal that on average, achievement gaps between grade 7-12 students classified by race-ethnicity, economic status, and parent education are among the largest in the country.

“The collaboration between West Chester University, Delaware County Community College, and EAB is the type of innovative partnership that can help change the entire trajectory of so many students’ lives,” says Dr. Garcia. “The Office of Postsecondary

and Higher Education is committed to supporting efforts such as this that work in a purposeful way to eradicate equity gaps in education and foster an increase in seamless, postsecondary attainment across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We applaud the newly established Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Collaborative as it works to benefit generations of people in a climate that works to close chronic gaps in achievement and celebrates equity in higher education.”

The alignment of the two institutions is quite natural and they welcome the challenge. West Chester University and Delaware County Community College have a long history of working together to increase educational opportunities for area students. Last year, the two joined forces to strengthen a dual admission agreement that now enables qualified, enrolled Delaware County Community College students to earn an associate degree and then transfer seamlessly to West Chester University in a parallel major with opportunities not typical of such agreements. Qualified Delaware County Community College students now transfer to West Chester University with guaranteed housing, a renewable scholarship, and success coaching. The announcement came at a time when students had increased need amidst an unyielding pandemic.

[QUOTE FROM DR. L JOY GATES BLACK]

West Chester University President Dr. Christopher M. Fiorentino agrees with his colleague. “As an institution that takes great pride in activating its access mission every day,” he said, “West Chester University is deeply committed to this critical project that will ultimately help all of us make securing higher education possible for more students of color and students who have significant financial need. It is up to us to work together to develop ways to eliminate one of the greatest barriers of our times — systemic equity gaps.”

The EAB, Inc. Moonshot for Equity program provides the strategy needed to finally close those gaps on numerous levels. The program centers on a strategic student-success plan that provides participating schools with comprehensive research-based practices, technology, and advisory services. All participating schools receive equity-mindedness training from national experts at the USC Race and Equity Center, and all schools are required to implement 15 research-based best practices proven to remove systemic barriers to success, and to collaborate with other schools in their area to establish common academic pathways that facilitate student transfers between two-and four-year institutions.

Participating Moon-shot institutions also partner with local high schools and community-based organizations to help more underserved students attend college by providing them with resources and information on how to identify best-fit universities, search for scholarships, and connect with counselors. These resources are offered through EAB’s College Greenlight.

EAB, which also announced the partnership of schools in the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region today, launched Moon Shot for Equity last October in cooperation with its first consortium of colleges and universities in Southeastern Wisconsin. Since the launch, these Wisconsin schools have made significant progress, conducting equity mindedness training for more than 600 participants, reforming registration holds that prevent students from registering for classes because of minor administrative or financial complications, and improving transfer pathways to make it easier for students — and the credits they've earned — to move between institutions.

[QUOTE FROM TOM SUGAR]

Visit eab.com/moonshot to learn more about the project.

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