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Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara Conducts FAFSA Test at Santa Maria High School

Santa Barbara, CA — As part of an exclusive U.S. Department of Education initiative, the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara has conducted initial testing of the latest Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with the help of community members and education advocates in Santa Maria.

More than 100 seniors from Santa Maria, Pioneer Valley, and Ernest Righetti high schools completed the FAFSA in person over the course of a six-hour workshop hosted by the Scholarship Foundation at the Santa Maria High School Library on October 3. They were joined by parents, Santa Maria High School counselors, and representatives from the Early Academic Outreach (EAOP) and California Student Opportunity and Access (Cal-SOAP) programs. Federal Student Aid (FSA) officials were also on hand. The submitted applications will be reviewed for technical and informational errors by financial services staff at UC Santa Barbara and Westmont College.

“This testing workshop showcased the capabilities of our organization and those of our partners in the local education advocacy space,” said Foundation President and CEO Melinda Cabrera. “We are grateful for the hands-on support provided by counselors at Santa Maria High School as well as EAOP, Cal-SOAP, and FSA staff members. I know that parents who participated very much appreciated the support. We are honored to have been selected for this important testing role.”

The Scholarship Foundation is one of only six organizations nationwide selected by the Department of Education to conduct initial testing of the latest FAFSA. Also participating in the first round of FAFSA beta testing are: Alabama Possible (AL), Bridge2Life (FL), College AIM (GA), Education is Freedom (TX), and the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria (VA). Three additional rounds of testing will

take place as part of the Education Department's phased rollout of the FAFSA in advance of the form's wide-scale release by December 1.

Required by virtually all organizations that provide college financial aid, the FAFSA is typically released on October 1, but last year's iteration was delayed until late December. Ensuing technical problems further complicated admissions and funding decisions for students nationwide, prompting the Education Department's phased rollout this year. The department is coordinating beta testing in partnership with the National College Attainment Network.

The Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara is the nation's largest community-based provider of college scholarships, having cumulatively awarded in excess of \$150 million to some 62,000 county students since its founding in 1962. A nonprofit organization, the Scholarship Foundation also provides free financial aid advising services. For additional information, visit www.sbscholarship.org.

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