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First-Generation College Students Recognized for “Realizing the Dream”

INDIANAPOLIS, November 5, 2010 – It’s one thing to have a dream; it’s another to realize it. And that’s exactly why 31 students from Indiana’s independent colleges and universities are being celebrated at tomorrow evening’s 22nd annual “Realizing the Dream” banquet.

Now sophomores, they have realized the dream of being the first in their families to go to college, have been selected by their colleges for outstanding achievement in the freshman year, and are now advancing towards successfully completing their bachelor’s degrees.

Made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to the Independent Colleges of Indiana, the event recognizes first-generation students attending ICI campuses, along with their inspirational teachers and families. The event is being held at the Hilton Indianapolis North, Saturday, November 6, with a reception at 6:15 p.m. and awards dinner at 7:00 p.m.

Each honored student will receive a \$2,000 check to help with college costs, and each student’s chosen “most influential” teacher will receive \$1,000. This year’s keynote speaker is Columbus East High School’s Greg Lewis, recently named Indiana’s 2010 Preserve America History Teacher of the Year and recognized by one of last year’s “Realizing the Dream” award winners as his most influential teacher.

One out of every three students on ICI campuses is a first-generation one, with the average family income of students attending one of Indiana’s independent colleges approximately \$3,500 less than that of their peers at public four-year colleges. Generous financial aid provided by the campuses themselves, combined with state and federal grants, makes a private college education a possibility for all students in Indiana.

“We are so grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for making it possible for us to honor these first-generation students,” says Richard L. Ludwick, president and CEO of Independent Colleges of Indiana. “ICI exists to provide higher-education opportunity and choice for all students, regardless of family background, so this event truly reflects and supports our mission. We are proud, as well, that because of the higher graduation rates of our ICI colleges and universities, these students are twice as likely to realize the dream of completing their degrees in four years.”

Independent Colleges of Indiana, Inc. (ICI) is a nonprofit corporation that represents the state’s 31 nonprofit accredited colleges and universities. ICI member institutions enroll some 87,000 students (approximately 22 percent of all students statewide) and annually produce 35 percent of all bachelor’s degrees in Indiana.