



college forward

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 17, 2007

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College Forward Welcomes Home Ivy League Student

Lehman High graduate is one of 90 students in innovative college retention program

AUSTIN, Texas — On Saturday, December 22, 2007, nonprofit college access program College Forward will welcome students from colleges all over the country back home to Central Texas—including the program's first Ivy League student. Diana Gomez, who graduated from Lehman High School last spring, started this fall as a first-year student at Brown University in Rhode Island, beating the odds for her demographic by navigating the grueling admissions process to arrive at one of the most elite colleges in the country.

"I am very excited to come home to Texas," said Diana. "Along with seeing my family and friends, I cannot wait to have my first home-cooked meal in over a semester. Being without my beloved Tex-Mex cuisine has been intensely brutal."

College Forward helped Diana through every step of her college application process: during two years of after-school classes, her Classroom Coach guided her through the initial college search, preparation for the ACT, and the dreaded college essay. Although Diana's family had worried about the cost of her education, Diana and College Forward tackled even that obstacle: the generosity of Brown's financial aid package made it a less expensive option than Austin Community College, the school Diana's family had expected she would attend.

"College Forward was the push I needed in order to attend my dream school," said Diana. "Not only did they help me every step of the way with all of my college applications and my financial aid forms, but they also did a wonderful job of explaining the entire process to my parents who have never attended college. Applying to college would have been a very difficult job without them."

This Saturday, Diana will join other College Forward graduates at the home of Executive Director Lisa Fielder to celebrate the end of the semester and bond over their college experiences. While the students attend schools as diverse as UT-Austin, Texas Woman's University, and Whittier College in California, they share a common bond: as students who are low-income, the first in their families to go to college, or both, they have blazed trails in their families and communities by pursuing higher education.

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◆ **100%** of College Forward's students have been **accepted into colleges nationwide**

◆ College Forward students' **ACT scores increased** by an average of **22%**

◆ College Forward's high school graduates are awarded an average of over **\$16,000 each in scholarships and grants**

Saturday's reunion is part of an innovative retention program College Forward runs for its graduates. Of the many college access programs across the country, only a few—including College Forward—offer retention support to help students succeed after finishing the program. "If I ever feel stressed or have any questions regarding college life, they are just a phone call away," said Diana.

Thanks to a grant from the TG Public Benefits Program, College Forward's retention program will expand substantially in 2008 to include study skill and career development workshops, transfer support, and a summer program to help students bridge the gap between high school graduation and college.

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