



*college forward*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 4, 2008

Contact: Amelia Koford, Marketing and PR Coordinator  
512-452-4800 (work), 515-291-0138 (cell), or akoford@collegeforward.org

## **Over 100 low-income Central Texas youth to embark on three-day tour of colleges**

*AUSTIN, Texas* — Last summer, Alma felt skeptical as she packed for a multi-day tour led by her after-school college access program, College Forward. She hadn't been able to picture herself at any of the Texas colleges she'd visited until then, and she didn't think the tour would do anything to change her opinion. But when she stepped off the bus at the University of Houston, she got a gut feeling that this was where she belonged. She returned to Del Valle High School for her senior year with a renewed sense of purpose, applied to the University of Houston, and was accepted. She will enter the University of Houston as a freshman this fall.

Next week, over 100 Central Texas youth will follow in Alma's footsteps, participating in the "College, Here We Come!" Summer Tour of colleges. They are rising seniors from seven Central Texas high schools in five school districts: Austin Independent School District (ISD), Del Valle ISD, Round Rock ISD, Georgetown ISD, and Hays CISD. All are participants in College Forward, a program that helps motivated, economically disadvantaged students successfully transition to college. This Summer Tour is College Forward's fourth annual and the largest in the organization's history.

"We've found that although many students are motivated to apply to college, they often can't actually picture themselves there," said Lisa Fielder, College Forward's Executive Director and co-founder. She developed the Summer Tour in 2005 because of her strong belief that campus visits are necessary to help students find their 'best fit' colleges.

Students will tour each campus, stay in dorms, hear presentations from admissions officials, and participate in workshops.

The tour will begin Wednesday, June 11 and end Saturday, June 14, and will include visits to the University of St. Thomas in Houston, The University of Houston, the

Call us at (512) 452-4800  
[www.collegeforward.org](http://www.collegeforward.org)

University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas Tech University, and Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene.

Visiting this diverse group of colleges helps students get a sense of the important differences between schools: large and small, rural and urban, public and private, and religious and secular. Students often learn things they hadn't known, like the fact that they feel intimidated by a large school or suffocated by a rural location. By figuring out the characteristics of their 'best fit' college before they submit applications, they increase the likelihood that they will feel comfortable and supported rather than alienated once they get to college. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that they will persist to earn a bachelor's degree, beating the odds for their demographic group.

Fielder also discussed an added benefit of the Summer Tour: the motivation it provides for students' senior year, when many of their peers experience a 'senior slump.'

"After the Summer Tour, we always see some students rushing into their counselor's offices to switch from a 'slacker' senior year schedule to one full of AP courses," said Fielder. "They have so much fun on the Summer Tour that they can't wait to get to college, and they know challenging themselves is the way to make sure they get there."

###

*College Forward provides college preparatory services to motivated, economically-disadvantaged students, in order to facilitate their transition to college and make the process exciting and rewarding. We believe that access to higher education is the right of every young Texan.*

*[www.collegeforward.org](http://www.collegeforward.org)*