

SANTA FE COMMUNITY COLLEGE NEWS RELEASE

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New SFCC Scholarship Program Puts College Degrees Within Reach

Santa Fe, NM, Thursday, April 14, 2005 — The dream of a college degree and with it, a profitable, meaningful career can sometimes vanish under the weight of life's responsibilities. Many full time students work more than 20 hours a week, have young children at home, and can only devote a fraction of their time to their studies. In this type of environment, academic performance and a graduation date can slip further and further away.

But a new Santa Fe Community College scholarship program aims to give students the means – and the will – to succeed.

The program titled “Contract for a Better Tomorrow” will provide financial assistance other than funds from traditional sources. The funds can be used for any purpose the student may need, as long as the student stays in college and progresses toward a degree.

Participants in the new program also will receive loaned textbooks, tutoring and coaching as well as cash bonuses for high grade achievement and for staying in school.

The cash payments will go directly to the participants on a bi-weekly basis.

The first group of approximately 40 participants will be selected as early as this summer.

The program is need-based, and participants will be selected from among the current SFCC student population. It is anticipated the students will be working adults, parents and enrolled in college on a part-time basis.

The Contract for a Better Tomorrow Program was developed during the past six months as a result of discussions between SFCC Governing Board Chairman Bruce Besser, Vice Chair Carole Brito and SFCC President Jim McLaughlin, who agreed a new approach to scholarship funding could address a specific, growing need.

The funding was realized when the private, local Domanica Foundation offered to help by providing funds through the college's new fund-raising entity, GROW Santa Fe Community College.

“An education is the promise of a better life. We felt that by making this program a ‘Contract for the Better Tomorrow’ we would convey active engagement, accountability

and a pledge to the students who participate,” Besser said.

Participating students will take part in a ceremony in which they will actually sign a binding contract, agreeing to the terms of the scholarship. The value of the scholarship will vary from \$2,000 to \$2,500 per year, depending on specific grades earned.

Governing Board Chairman Besser said that traditional financial aid programs often lack a sufficient component of assistance for those students who are classified as “non-traditional.” These students are generally older than 21, working, and have children. The majority of community college students fit the non-traditional description — many of whom balance the demands of jobs, classes and family life. He said it was time to put real dollars to work in support of adult students who face such challenges.

SFCC student Lucia Fernandez-Lucero is a mother of three young boys, recently became single, and dreams of one day owning a business. She says the Contract for a Better Tomorrow Program would make a big difference in her life.

“I know that if I’m going to make it, I need my degree. I want to stay in school this summer, but I may need to work more instead.” Currently, Fernandez-Lucero earns a modest salary from her job through the SFCC campus employment program.

Out of high school for ten years, Fernandez-Lucero says that as an adult, she has experienced a renewed sense of appreciation for the value of education.

“I would not have had the patience to stay in college right after high school. But now, my boys see me studying and I think it’s good for them to see me enjoying my classes. I’m looking at my long-term future.”

Jayne Sayre agrees the Contract for a Better Tomorrow will provide a good incentive to stay in college. Jayne, of San Ysidro, NM came to SFCC as a 29-year-old. The mother of a one-year-old girl works full-time as a sales associate at a local clothing store and is studying business administration. She dreams of becoming a business owner.

“I absolutely wouldn’t be here without financial aid. I didn’t go to college after high school because I was sick of school, and now I’m kicking myself. Now I want my daughter to know I am going to school for her, and I want her to be proud of me for that.”

SFCC President Jim McLaughlin said in many cases, the college will strive to offer on-campus employment to scholarship recipients and make special efforts to ensure program participants make steady progress toward degree completion.

“It is critical we help students remain engaged in the learning process to ensure success. We plan to provide access, affordability and accountability,” McLaughlin said. “Many of our students need extra help, whether it be counseling on how to budget time and money, or tutoring for a specific class, or learning new ways to interact with other students who face similar life challenges. The goal is improved learning, increased persistence and

ultimately a higher number of graduates entering the work force prepared to contribute to the community.”

About Santa Fe Community College

Santa Fe Community College serves more than 14,500 students per year in its credit, noncredit and adult basic education programs. For further information, visit www.sfccnm.edu or call (505) 428-1000.