

## Press Release

LAMAR  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### FIFTH YEAR BECOMING ASCENT

(Lamar, Colorado; February 10, 2010) With the passage of Colorado Revised Statute 22-35-101 or the “Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act” in May of 2009, the Colorado State Legislature established a statewide concurrent-enrollment plan that gives high school students an opportunity to earn a college degree while finishing high school. With this legislation, they sought to articulate and simplify pathways between high schools and institutions of higher education, especially while the student is still in high school. A critical piece of the legislation was to offer a “fifth year” option - where a graduating senior may choose to stay an additional year in high school to attend a year of college - to **all** Colorado school districts. The “Fifth Year” alternative will be renamed ASCENT (**A**ccelerating **S**tudents through **C**oncurrent **E**nrollment). Although colleges and school districts are beginning to apply statutory changes now, full implementation of the measure will be required in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Lamar Community College and area school districts are in a second year of offering seniors a Fifth Year option. The program began with 16 students successfully completing the 2008-2009 academic year, while 22 Fifth Year students are on track to complete this spring. In the program, the school district pays for the student’s tuition; some school districts assist with books and other course materials. The student remains enrolled in both the district and the college. He or she does not receive a high school diploma until the end of the ‘fifth’ year. The college plans for enrollment to grow again next year.

Fifth Year/ASCENT students must take 12-15 credits per semester to participate in the program. Students are responsible for course fees and book charges not covered by the district. And student participation in Fifth Year/ASCENT must be approved by a school administrator.

“Families are realizing that a year less of college tuition can be a significant savings, and it provides an excellent transition between high school and the student’s next step in education or employment,” explained Maggie Pacino, LCC’s Coordinator of Education Programs. “This can be a substantial reduction in cost for middle income families who don’t qualify for need-based aid. I encourage students and their families to speak with their high school counselors or me to see if Fifth Year/ASCENT is a good fit for them.” Students are capable of completing an associate degree by the end of their fifth year with careful planning.

Program limitations include one for high school student athletes who plan to play at the collegiate level. Fifth Year/ASCENT students are not eligible to participate in high school or college sports.

Fifth Year/ASCENT students do not qualify for state or federal need-based aid for school-related expenses not covered by the school district and are required to maintain a 2.0 GPA or higher in college coursework to participate.

“Since ASCENT will require upcoming seniors to have earned a minimum number of credits of college-level coursework to be eligible, younger students and their families may want to make preparations to be ready for eligibility,” New ASCENT regulations that will take effect in the 2012-2013 academic year will require students entering the program to have accrued at least 12 credits of college (dual) credit during the course of their high school education. Developmental courses may not be used toward the fifteen credit minimum; a student’s English, reading and math skill levels must be ‘college-ready.’ During the

transition, LCC and area school districts will be working together to ensure students are ready to participate in ASCENT.

For more information, regarding ASCENT and other concurrent enrollment options available to high school students, contact Maggie Pacino at 336.1584 or [education@lamarcc.edu](mailto:education@lamarcc.edu).

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