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Fong Named To Lead Carnegie Developmental Math Initiative

Bernadine Chuck Fong, president emerita of Foothill College (Los Altos Hills, Calif.), has been named a Senior Partner with The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's new community college initiative. In this work, Carnegie addresses one of our nation's most significant educational improvement problems: the extraordinarily high failure rates among students in developmental mathematics in community colleges.

Carnegie is catalyzing the growth of a practice-research-entrepreneur community aimed at dramatically increasing the proportion of community college students who are mathematically prepared to succeed in further academic study and/or occupational pursuits. As a first priority, the Foundation seeks to support action on the development of an integrated pathway to and through statistics.

Carnegie believes the traditional community college mathematics pathway aims to prepare students for majors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (the "STEM" majors). These requirements, however, do not serve well the vast majority of community college students who may be pointed toward occupational programs in health services and public safety or toward liberal arts, business education and social science majors in four-year institutions. In contrast, statistics, data analysis and quantitative reasoning are not only essential for a growing number of occupations and professions, they are also the mathematics needed for making decisions under conditions of uncertainty, an inescapable condition of modern life.

Fong, who formerly served on Carnegie's Board of Trustees, has been involved in efforts to reform developmental education in the community college sector through her work as an educational consultant and executive coach for the national Achieving the Dream Initiative, which aims to increase the academic success of under-represented students through institutional transformation. In addition, in her last five years as president of Foothill, the institution led California's then 109 community colleges in the percentage of students who were successful in transfer, as well as in basic skills programs in mathematics and English. She is co-director of the Dale Tillery Institute for Community College Leadership at the University of California, Berkeley, which is also focused on developmental education and student equity issues. Fong will focus on Carnegie's role in bringing together the right mix of practitioners, researchers, social entrepreneurs, policy makers, and other stakeholders—including students—to map the dimensions of the problem, identify promising solutions, and advocate for and support the efforts of a community engaged in continuous evidence-based improvement.

"Bernadine's amazing reputation and network and her expertise and experience not only with community colleges but also with the complicated issues surrounding developmental mathematics made her the perfect person to help us with this work," said Carnegie President

Anthony S. Bryk. “She knows the problem in all its dimensions and she is well aware of all the innovative work that is already being done in this area and where Carnegie can add value.”

Fong will join the Foundation in this role in October 2009.

Founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1905 and chartered in 1906 by an act of Congress, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent policy and research center. Its current mission is to support needed transformations in American education through tighter connections between teaching practice, evidence of student learning, the communication and use of this evidence, and structured opportunities to build knowledge.

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