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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**California Community Colleges Partners with United States Department of  
Agriculture for Economic Development Program**

***Chancellor Brice W. Harris says partnership will help rural communities  
prosper***

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris announced today that his office has entered into a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development to increase access to training and higher education for rural citizens, support and enhance the agriculture industry and strengthen the state's rural economy.

Chancellor Harris and USDA Rural Development's California State Director Dr. Glenda Humiston signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) today at the Chancellor's Office in Sacramento. This MOU outlines core objectives to increase cooperation between the California USDA Rural Development and rural California community colleges. Through the partnership, the two agencies will work together to strengthen local economies by providing and co-sponsoring rural advancement workshops and seminars; offering financial and technical resources to strengthen and improve small and family-operated farms, agriculture-related and other small businesses; and provide outreach assistance to rural colleges and small businesses through webinars and other networking events.

"This new partnership ensures that our rural colleges continue to be beacons of help for the communities they serve," California Community Colleges Chancellor Harris said. "I'm pleased the federal government recognizes the great job our colleges have done already in the area of workforce and economic development and that they understand we are uniquely positioned to provide further services and training. When business is allied with higher education in a program such as this, it's a win-win. The businesses get the economic and human capital they need to grow and prosper and our students get trained for new, high-paying jobs so they can grow and prosper, too."

Eleven Capital Readiness events have been scheduled throughout the state to provide small and family operated farm owners, and agriculture-related and other small business owners in rural communities with information on how to get capital to grow their business and improve their local economy. Representatives

from USDA Rural Development, the California Community Colleges' Workforce & Economic Development Business and Entrepreneurship Centers, the Small Business Development Center and the local community colleges will provide valuable information and resources that participants can use to obtain loans and receive available services. The first event will be held at 3 p.m. on Feb. 27 at Yuba College in Marysville. The Capital Readiness tour concludes May 16 at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo.

"We are excited to partner in this effort to expand our existing relationships with California's community colleges," Director Humiston said. "Working together we can better leverage our programs and resources to help improve both the accessibility and quality of education in our rural communities and in turn help businesses create jobs and grow our state's rural economies."

To see the schedule of the Capital Readiness events, [click here](#).

Agriculture, water and environmental technologies has been designated as a priority sector for the California Community Colleges system and resources are being directed to provide training for students and encourage partnerships with local businesses.

"Agriculture continues to be a major driver of the state's economy and the fabric of our rural communities," Vice Chancellor Ton-Quinlivan said. "We need to do everything we can to support farmers, businesses and students that rely on the agriculture sector for their livelihoods. Community colleges are answering the call to action to close the skills gap and develop the needed workforce that drive regional economies and that's why this partnership with the USDA is so important, and why we are directing our efforts and resources to this sector. We are taking a national initiative and shaping it to fit the needs of California's farms and businesses."

In 2012, the USDA and the American Association of Community Colleges signed an MOU to strengthen rural economies throughout the nation. The same national goals are outlined in the MOU with the California Community Colleges system.

"The Obama administration and the USDA recognize that an educated and skilled workforce is essential to helping businesses grow and create jobs in rural areas," said USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager. "The (White House) Rural Council recognizes that stronger education is vital to better jobs and this MOU is an important step toward strengthening our rural economy by developing a stronger, more competitive workforce that businesses must have in order to succeed."

*The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation. It is composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.4 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.*

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Regards,

**Van Ton-Quinlivan, Vice Chancellor**

Workforce & Economic Development Division

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