

THE PROJECT ON STUDENT DEBT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 21, 2010

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright, 202/371-1999
202/421-5830
Shannon Gallegos, 510/318-7915

Student Debt Keeps Rising, Unemployment High for Recent Grads **New report includes state-by-state and campus-by-campus debt levels for Class of 2009**

(Oakland, CA) - College seniors who graduated in 2009 carried an average of \$24,000 in student loan debt, up 6% from the previous year. Meanwhile, unemployment for recent college graduates climbed from 5.8% in 2008 to 8.7% in 2009 – the highest annual rate on record for college graduates aged 20 to 24. The Project on Student Debt's new report, *Student Debt and the Class of 2009*, and a companion interactive map (http://projectonstudentdebt.org/state_by_state-data.php) include average debt levels for the 50 states and District of Columbia and more than 1,000 U.S. colleges and universities.

The report focuses on students who graduate from public and private nonprofit four-year colleges with loans. Students in the District of Columbia and New Hampshire graduated with the highest average debt levels: \$30,033 and \$29,443, respectively. Those in Utah and Georgia had the lowest average debt: \$12,860 and \$16,568 respectively. As detailed in the report, actual state averages for student debt are likely higher than these estimates, which are based on data reported voluntarily by public and private nonprofit four-year colleges. The report also includes lists of high- and low-debt colleges, and new data on how much of the Class of 2009's debt at graduation is made up of private (nonfederal) loans.

“With student debt rising and jobs hard to come by, it's more important than ever to shop around when deciding where to go to college,” said Lauren Asher, president of the Institute for College Access & Success, home of the Project on Student Debt. “This report shows that debt levels vary widely – not only from state to state but also from college to college, even when the sticker prices look the same. Differences in the kind of debt students graduate with matter, too. Income-Based Repayment and other programs can help you manage your federal student loan debt, but if you have private student loans, you're really at the mercy of your lender.”

The report notes that the 6% increase in average debt at the national level is similar to the average annual increase over the past four years. It is likely that the Class of 2009 took out the bulk of their student loans before the recession began. In addition, many colleges made concerted efforts to increase or maintain need-based grant aid when the economy faltered, so that students could afford to stay in school.

For-profit colleges are not included in the state averages or high- and low-debt lists because so few of these schools provide the necessary data. Only seven for-profit colleges reported student debt data this year. However, at the national level, the most recent data available show that students who graduate from for-profit four-year colleges are much more likely to borrow and borrow much more than their counterparts at public and nonprofit colleges. The report also discusses other significant limitations in the amount and quality of data available on student debt, and provides recommendations for improving federal data about borrowing at all types of colleges.

Another Institute web site, College InSight (<http://College-InSight.org>), lets users view student debt levels in context with data on affordability, diversity, and student success. The site is newly updated with data for 2008-09, and can be used to compare trends over time as well as to examine particular schools, sectors, states, and the nation as a whole.

#

The Project on Student Debt is an initiative of the Institute for College Access & Success, an independent, nonprofit organization working to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. For more information see www.projectonstudentdebt.org and www.ticas.org, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/TICAS_org.