



HARVARD Kennedy School

**ASH INSTITUTE**

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## LEARN AND EARN WINS INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AWARD

*Harvard University's Ash Institute Honors North Carolina Program's Commitment to Improve High School Graduate Rates and Increase College Access*

**Cambridge, Mass., – September 9, 2008** – The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School today announced Learn and Earn of North Carolina as a winner of the 2008 Innovations in American Government Awards. The program is designed to increase North Carolina's high school graduation rates and better prepare high school seniors for higher education and careers in today's increasingly competitive job market. Honored at the 2008 Innovations in American Government Awards in Washington, D.C., Learn and Earn will receive \$100,000 toward replication and dissemination of its program around the country.

Spearheaded by Governor Easley and through the support of North Carolina's General Assembly, Community College system, State Board of Education, and local school districts, Learn and Earn was launched in 2004 to not only increase the number of high school graduates, but to also better prepare them for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. Learn and Earn is based on the idea that students with more advanced levels of education will benefit economically in the future – the more a student learns, the more he or she will earn.

Learn in Earn uses the following three-pronged approach:

- **Learn and Earn Early College High Schools:** Located on college campuses throughout the state, these high schools offer students a more rigorous project-based curriculum than traditional high schools. Class sizes are smaller and often the outside business community partners with such schools to provide students with industry relevant courses as well as opportunities to pursue additional field-specific degree certificates. In no more than five years and at no cost to the students, graduates earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of college credit. These high schools target first generation college bound

students as well as students who benefit from different learning environments. Currently, there are 60 Learn and Earn high schools open across the state.

- **Learn and Earn Online:** Nearly 20,000 students from around the state can enroll in Learn and Earn Online tuition free. The program promotes access and exposure to college by allowing qualified students to take college courses online from every public high school in North Carolina. The program also enables students to graduate from high school with an associate's degree or two years of college credit.
- **EARN Grants:** Education Access Rewards North Carolina (EARN) Grants make college more affordable for North Carolina high school graduates. These annual \$4,000 grants lessen the burden of paying for college and can be combined with other forms of assistance to support college bound students. Grantees must meet certain grade requirements and contribute nominal payments through earned income programs. This fall, 25,000 students will be eligible for EARN Grants.

In the spring of 2008, Learn and Earn graduated its first class of students. Early results demonstrate dramatically lower drop out rates with nearly 50 percent of Learn and Earn schools reporting no drop outs at all. Participating ninth graders have a passing rate of 96 percent compared to an 80 percent pass rate for their peers in non-Learn and Earn schools. Moreover, schools cite higher job satisfaction and retention rates for their teachers than from those in non-Learn and Earn schools.

“Creativity and innovation are our stock and trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so America’s future depends on our ability to give students the knowledge, talent, and skill they need for success in this competitive economy,” said Mike Easley, governor of North Carolina. “By providing students free college while they are in high school and making a four-year degree more affordable, Learn and Earn gives children the opportunity to reach their full potential and helps North Carolina build the most skilled workforce in the nation.”

“To compete in the global economy of today, higher education is becoming increasingly necessary,” said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in American Government Awards at Harvard Kennedy School. “Learn and Earn has engaged both public and private partners in efforts to ensure educational opportunity for North Carolina’s students. The culture of cooperation and adoption of a dual approach – emphasizing both academic achievement and college accessibility – is worthy of replication throughout the country.”

Since 1986, the Ash Institute’s Innovations in American Government Awards Program at Harvard Kennedy School has honored 187 federal, state, and local government agencies through Ford Foundation support. In highlighting exemplary models of government innovation, the Program drives continued progress in improving the quality of life of citizens and encourages scholarly research and teaching cases at Harvard University and institutions worldwide. Many award-winning programs have

been replicated across jurisdictions and policy areas, and have served as harbingers of today's reform strategies or as forerunners to state and federal legislation.

**About the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation**

The Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Institute fosters creative and effective government problem-solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. Asia Programs, a school-wide initiative integrating Asia-related activities, joined the Ash Institute in July 2008. The Ford Foundation is a founding donor of the Institute. Additional information about the Ash Institute is available at [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu). Applicants for the 2009 Innovations in American Government Awards are encouraged to apply at [www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu](http://www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu).

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