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**FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA TELLS DC-CAP GRADS
TO INVEST IN THEMSELVES AND PERSEVERE**

Annual Celebration Honors DC-CAP High School and College Grads

Students Recognized for Exceptional Academics, Community Involvement and Perseverance

WASHINGTON, DC – June 20, 2014 – First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the keynote address at DC College Access Program's (DC-CAP) annual Graduation Celebration last night, telling the recent graduates to invest in themselves to ultimately help their family and community and to never stop struggling in the face of adversity as it is a sign of growth.

The crowd of 800 at the Marriott Wardman Park included 250 Class of 2014 DC-CAP college grads and 150 Class of 2014 DC-CAP high school grads, as well as family members, DC-CAP staff and special guests. All of the graduates attended DC public and public charter high schools and were supported through high school and college by DC-CAP, a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to help *all* DC students prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college.

"By continuing to focus on your own success you will ensure you can keep giving back – not just to the people you love but to the communities you come from," said First Lady Michelle Obama. "Don't ever, every shy away from a good struggle. Instead, I want you to seek it out and dive in head first, because that's what truly successful people do." She continued, "More importantly, you all are role models for young people across this country, especially the DC-CAP high school graduates who are here tonight who are going to follow in your footsteps."

"We believe what Mrs. Obama believes – that education is the cornerstone of success," said Argelia Rodriguez, President and CEO, DC-CAP. "We are deeply honored to have the First Lady help us celebrate the success of this year's 675 DC-CAP college graduates. DC-CAP will continue to serve the students of the District of Columbia and do our part to help ensure that America's students are able to take charge of their futures by earning a college degree."

DC-CAP holds this annual graduation celebration annually to applaud the students' achievements and honor their families who supported them. President (then Senator) Barack Obama addressed the first DC-CAP graduation celebration in 2005.

DC-CAP provides student and parent college readiness counseling starting in 9th grade, helping families navigate the college application and financial aid process throughout the high school years. DC-CAP also provides integral support and financial assistance for students while in college. The overwhelming majority of students served by DC-CAP are from low-income, minority, single-parent households and are the first in their families to attend college. Since DC-CAP's inception in 1999, the program has played a critical role in helping to double the number of DC high school students enrolling in college and triple the number who graduate.

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Three DC-CAP 2013-2014 college graduates were recognized by DC-CAP for demonstrating exceptional academic achievement, perseverance, and community involvement and leadership:

Academic Excellence Award – Faith Ajayi

- Faith Ajayi was the 2009 Valedictorian at McKinley Technology Senior High School. As a result of her academic achievement, Faith was a recipient of the Hellenguard, Kappa, and Masonic Foundation scholarships for each year of college. In December 2013, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from Virginia Commonwealth University with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering and a minor in Chemistry. Faith is currently preparing for the Medical College Admission Test and applying to medical schools in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Her goal is to become a doctor and practice medicine internationally.

Community Involvement & Leadership Award – Isiah Guinyard

- Isiah Guinyard is a 2009 graduate of McKinley Technology High School and a 2014 graduate of North Carolina A&T State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. Isiah will begin teaching elementary-aged children in Houston, Texas in August. He plans to pursue graduate studies in Urban Education Policy. His ultimate goal is to become the DC Public Schools Chancellor or serve in another urban school district.

Most Perseverance Award – Jamila Lee

- A native Washingtonian, Jamila Lee is a 2009 graduate of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Before enrolling at Temple, Jamila had aspirations to become a professional dancer. In 2009, Jamila competed in the first DC-Capital Stars Talent Competition and was awarded a \$10,000 scholarship for her second place finish. In May, Jamila earned a Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Hospitality Management from Temple University. Currently, Jamila is a Sales and Marketing Coordinator for Westin Hotels.

About DC College Access Program

DC-College Access Program (DC-CAP) is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping all DC students prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college as the cornerstone of a successful future. Since 1999, DC-CAP has worked with parents and educational partners, inspiring, counseling and providing fundamental support to help under-resourced DC students believe that college is possible, find the path to get there and complete their education. By building long-term relationships and connections, DC-CAP is with students every step of the way, navigating the complex waters of the college application and financial aid process, as well as providing integral support while in college. DC-CAP has helped more than 21,000 students enroll in college, supports more than 6,500 currently in college through its retention division, has awarded more than \$31 million in scholarships, and has celebrated the success of more than 6,000 college graduates who otherwise never would have had the opportunity for higher education. For more information, visit www.dccaporg.

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