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Los Angeles Public Library First Library in the Nation to Offer High School Diploma and Career Certificate Program

Career Online High School Pilot Program Begins March 3

Los Angeles, February 27, 2014 — The Los Angeles Public Library is the first public library in the nation to offer adults the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online through Career Online High School (COHS). Beginning March 3, the Library will offer a limited number of grants to qualified adults (19 and older) who are residents of the City of Los Angeles and looking to advance their careers, prepare for workforce entry or continue their education. There is no cost to students for the program but enrollment is limited and demand is expected to be high.

The Library’s pilot program is administered through Gale, part of Cengage Learning, a leading provider of educational content, tools and services to libraries, schools and businesses. Part of the world’s first accredited, private online school district, Career Online High School is specifically designed to re-engage adults into the education system and prepare them for entry into post-secondary education or the workforce.

Los Angeles has among the highest high school dropout rates, with upwards of 25 percent of adult residents lacking a high school diploma, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Nationally, the dropout crisis has reached epidemic proportions: every 26 seconds another student gives up on school, resulting in more than one million American dropouts a year, or 7,000 every day. People lacking a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed, impoverished, and incarcerated—and are estimated to cost taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in lost earnings, welfare and medical costs.

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“The population of adults without a high school diploma is as high as 60 percent in some of the geographic areas served by our library system,” says John F. Szabo, City Librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library, which serves over four million people. “Our mission is to educate and empower every individual in our city’s diverse communities. We could not be more excited to offer Career Online High School and make a real impact in helping these adults reach their education and career goals. This is a game-changing program for our library and a life-changing program for our patrons.”

The application process features an online self-assessment and pre-requisite course, followed by an in-person interview. Successful candidates are entered into a lottery. Each month, a limited number of applicants will be randomly selected by the automated lottery for enrollment in the program.

Once enrolled, COHS pairs each student with an academic coach, who provides the student with an individual career path, offers ongoing guidance, evaluates performance and connects the student with the resources needed to master the courses. Students will be given up to 18 months to complete the program.

The library has been able to increase enrollment through the Clinton Global Initiative Scholarship Matching Program. Through the program, the library received additional Career Online High School grants from Gale’s sister company, ed2go and Smart Horizons Career Online Education. The additional grants recognize the Library’s “Commitment to Action” pledge to implement innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges, including adults who lack a high school diploma. In the context of the Clinton Global Initiative, Los Angeles Public Library will improve the lives of community members while being a part of a broader assembly with world-wide reach.

“Gale is honored to play a role in connecting public libraries to Career Online High School, truly revolutionizing access to education for millions of Americans who need help the most. As one of our nation’s most trusted educational institutions, the public library is the perfect venue for Career Online High School,” said Nader Qaimari, a Senior Vice President at Gale. “Earning a high school diploma is a life-changing event and the positive impact on one’s financial and career success is astounding. We’re thrilled to help libraries fulfill their visions to improve lives and move their communities forward.”

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For more information about the Career Online High School program, including the qualification requirements and application process, visit the Los Angeles Public Library website at www.lapl.org/cohs.

The Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, more than six million books, and state-of-the-art technology accessible at www.lapl.org, provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for life-long learning.

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