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VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN VISITS WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE, PRAISES COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

[by Steve Springer, LACCD]

In a continuing effort by the Obama administration to focus on the key role community colleges play in higher education, Vice President Joe Biden visited West Los Angeles College Friday morning.

“The best kept secret in America is the community college system,” Biden told a group of students, trustees and administrators at WLAC. “Any country that out-educates us will out-compete us.”

Biden said those two lines are favorites of his wife, Jill, who teaches at a community college.

The vice president spent two hours touring the WLAC Dental Hygiene department, part of the college’s Allied Health Program, and taking part in a roundtable discussion. Also in attendance for the vice president’s appearance were employers interested in hiring college students. Biden stressed how critically important partnerships between community colleges and businesses are in providing students with career opportunities while bolstering the economy.

Biden also praised a proposal by President Obama to make community college tuition-free.

“Twelve years of free education is not enough,” said the vice president.

“Vice President Biden and President Obama understand that community college should be free so students can achieve their dreams of a better life and a brighter future,” said Scott Svonkin, president of the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees. “The vice president was clear that community colleges are the road to careers that will enable our students to take care of their families today and tomorrow.”

“Vice President Biden’s visit sums up a momentous few weeks for our community colleges,” said Dr. Francisco Rodriguez, LACCD chancellor. “It started with Governor Jerry Brown’s proposal to bolster funding for California’s community colleges. Then came President Obama’s declaration of free tuition for community colleges. Add to that the announcement earlier this week of initial approval of a bachelor’s degree in Dental Hygiene at WLAC and the vice president’s visit was an exclamation point on this exciting period. With this unprecedented national attention, we now have to take full advantage of this opportunity to tell our story.”

In welcoming the vice president to his campus, Dr. Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh, WLAC president, said, “The challenges to students seeking social mobility, access to meaningful work and a fulfilling civic life are the story of America today. At West Los Angeles College – like all community colleges – my excellent faculty and staff dedicate their lives to our students. We need the support from industry partners to even better integrate our programs and the job training aspect of our mission so we can prepare students for jobs that are emerging tomorrow and for a lifetime of careers that have yet to be invented in this gloriously changing world of knowledge, growth and of the improvement of matters of social justice.”

Senior dental hygiene student Jessica Short, who was part of the roundtable assembled for Biden, said he seemed, “Super humble. The heart that he has for the people is inspiring. “

Fellow student Courtney Cylear, a junior, said it was “Surreal. He came to listen and really understand where we are coming from in the community college world.”

About West Los Angeles College

West Los Angeles College is a fully accredited California Community College and part of the 9-campus Los Angeles Community College District. The college serves a diverse student body of approximately 11,000 which includes residents of West Los Angeles, Baldwin Hills, Ladera Heights, Culver City, Mar Vista, Palms, Venice, West Adams, and others. The college offers both university transfer and career preparation programs.

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January 23, 2015

Vice President Joe Biden Visits West

