SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE AWARDED GARRETT LEE SMITH SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT

San Diego, CA - September 25, 2015.....The Mental Health Counseling Center (MHCC) at San Diego City College (SDCC) has been awarded a three-year, $272,000 Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant. Approved by the San Diego Community College District Board of Trustees at the September 24 board meeting, the grant funds will be used to help prevent suicide and suicide attempts, reduce stigma surrounding mental illness, foster help-seeking behavior, and increase students’ access to treatment. Additionally, MHCC will specifically address the needs of SDCC’s at-risk populations, including LGBTQ, Veterans, Native American/Native Indian, and Foster Youth.

According to Leslie Easton, MHCC Coordinator, SDCC is one of 22 colleges nationwide to receive a 2015 Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention grant. The 2015-2018 Grant is funded through the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (GLSMA), under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services.

In 2003, Garrett Lee Smith committed suicide the day before his 22nd birthday. His father, Oregon Senator Gordon H. Smith dedicated his professional life to ensuring that something positive came from the tragic loss of his son. Signed into law in October 2004, GLSMA was the first legislation to provide funding specifically for youth suicide prevention programs.

Through the grant, MHCC will increase collaboration with on-campus departments, community partners, and healthcare providers to provide a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and crises response. This includes developing innovative educational materials promoting crisis lines and addressing suicide’s warning signs.
Additionally, MHCC will facilitate educational seminars for faculty, staff, and students on mental health topics specifically addressing the needs of SDCC’s at-risk populations; including LGBTQ, Veterans, Native American/Native Indian, and Foster Youth.

Grant Coordinator Julie Little is looking forward to sponsoring campus wide activities throughout the year including a Suicide Prevention Awareness Fair, Health and Wellness Expo, Interpersonal Violence and Sexual Assault response training and classroom presentations.

City College President Anthony E. Beebe said, “This grant is so important to receive as we can help direct attention to this critical issue. No lives should be lost to suicide. We have one of the best college Mental Health Counseling Centers in the nation, and our professionals will work tirelessly to increase the awareness of the signs and symptoms of suicide to help prevent the loss of any more lives.”

According to the Suicide Prevention Center, suicide is a leading cause of death among college and university students in the United States. In addition, many other college and university students have suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide. Between 2000 and 2013, the suicide rate in the United States rose from 10.43 (per 100,000) to 13.02. Over the same time period, the suicide rate for males went from 17.11 to 20.59. Among females, the rate rose from 4.00 to 5.67. Overall, men die by suicide at four times the rate of women. Suicides consistently outnumber homicides. The suicide rate is trending up, while the homicide rate is trending down.

San Diego City College will also host the fall 2015 California Community College Mental Health and Wellness Association Training on Friday, October 2, 2015. Dr. Reid Meloy, a forensic psychologist and author of the International Handbook of Threat Assessment, will provide the keynote presentation, “Contemporary Threat Assessment: College Response to a World at Risk”.

About San Diego City College
Established in 1914, San Diego City College serves as the educational cornerstone of downtown San Diego. A 60-acre urban campus, City College serves more than 16,000 students, and offers 200+ Associate Degrees and Certificates and 1,800 day, evening and weekend classes. City College is part of the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD), the second-largest of California’s 72 community college districts, comprised of San Diego City College, Mesa College, Miramar College and Continuing Education. For more information, visit: www.sdcity.edu.