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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THOMAS JEFFERSON WOULD BE SO DISAPPOINTED

Wilmington, Del., June 27, 2007 – When Thomas Jefferson penned the famous words “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, he was expressing a conviction that our founding fathers most assuredly hoped would be ingrained in the hearts and minds of every generation of young Americans. As the country prepares to celebrate another Independence Day, the day the nation honors the Declaration of Independence, chances are Thomas Jefferson would be very disappointed to know that most of America’s college seniors, the nation’s future leaders, can’t identify the document from which this important phrase originates.

According to data analyzed by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), only 48 percent of college seniors correctly identified the Declaration of Independence as the source for the phrase “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” Forty-two percent of seniors incorrectly identified *the Preamble to the Constitution* as the source for the phrase. More than 400 of the college students surveyed said the phrase could be found in Marx and Engels’ *The Communist Manifesto*.

The question was posed to college students (14,000 randomly selected seniors and freshmen on 50 campuses) as part of a 60-question multiple-choice test about our nation’s history and institutions. The survey was administered by the University of Connecticut’s Department of Public Policy on behalf of ISI. The average score for college seniors on all the questions was just 53.2 percent, a failure by a wide margin on a traditional grading scale. The average score for freshmen was 51.7 percent. ISI’s research proves that students graduate high school with little knowledge of America’s history and founding principles and gain hardly any additional knowledge during four years of college.

“The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are dramatically different documents. The founders knew the difference, and Jefferson would be disappointed to learn that even our brightest citizens no longer grasp the difference,” said Mike Ratliff, executive director of ISI’s Jack Miller Center for the Teaching of America’s Founding Principles. “Our research shows that greater civic learning goes hand-in-hand with more active citizenship. Therefore this ignorance about our nation’s history puts the practice of American democracy itself at risk.”

According to Ratliff, ISI's Jack Miller Center is working with students and faculty on college campuses across the country to address this void in knowledge about our nation's founding principles.

"Dozens of new academic centers of excellence are active now or are being planned by dedicated professors on college campuses nationwide," said Ratliff. "These centers are strengthening undergraduate education in our history through public lectures, conferences and workshops, post doctoral fellowships, graduate student fellowships, student and faculty seminars, alumni and donor events, and sponsorship of visiting professors."

For more information on ISI's Jack Miller Center, visit: www.isi.org or <http://millercenter.isi.org/>.

About ISI's Jack Miller Center for the Teaching of America's Founding Principles

The Jack Miller Center for the Teaching of America's Founding Principles was established in 2004 at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) by Jack Miller, a successful Chicago industrialist and philanthropist. Its mission is to strengthen on college and university campuses the teaching of America's founding principles—limited government, individual liberty, free market economics, the rule of law, private property, and personal responsibility. The Jack Miller Center provides support for new academic centers of excellence and helps grow the number of professors teaching America's heritage and founding principles through summer institutes, ongoing support, and networking efforts.

About the Intercollegiate Studies Institute

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) was founded in 1953 to further in successive generations of American college youth a better understanding of the economic, political, and ethical values that sustain a free and humane society. With ISI's volunteer representatives at over 900 colleges, and with more than 50,000 ISI student and faculty members on virtually every campus in the country, ISI directs tens of thousands of young people each year to a wide array of educational programs that deepen their understanding of the American ideal of ordered liberty.

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