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Foundation to Continue Support of Italian Language Education Despite Setback

Absence of Financial Support from the Republic of Italy Cited as Reason for Indefinite Suspension of AP Italian Language and Culture Program

New York, NY, January 8, 2009 – The Italian Language Foundation, Inc. announced today that half a year after its inception, it has successfully raised over \$650,000 in pledges and commitments to help underwrite the Advanced Placement Program in Italian Language and Culture of the College Board. The commitments came from individuals, corporations and philanthropic organizations in the United States. However, important commitments from Italian American organizations were contingent upon on a financial partnership with the Republic of Italy. Despite extensive good faith discussions and negotiations, material contributions from the Republic of Italy were not forthcoming. As a result, the AP Italian Language and Culture program will be suspended beginning with the 2009-2010 academic year.

“We are deeply grateful to the many people who recognized the importance and value of the AP Program in Italian as a touchstone of the appreciation of Italy’s great language and culture,” said Margaret I. Cuomo, M.D., President of the Italian Language Foundation. “Our goal has been to help cultivate and broaden the appreciation for Italian among current and future generations of students throughout America by supporting the AP Program in Italian, which provides incentives for academic excellence and commitment. The community of Italian language advocates has been galvanized by this effort, through Task Forces across the United States.”

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Louis Tallarini, Chairman of the Italian Language Foundation and President of the Columbus Citizens Foundation, added, "The majority of the \$650,000 we raised was in the form of pledges contingent upon financial commitments from the Republic of Italy. Despite extremely promising negotiations, support from the Republic of Italy did not materialize. We are disappointed that the Republic of Italy declined the opportunity to invest in an international program that is an asset for the Republic of Italy and its bilateral relations with the United States in education, culture, tourism and trade. We remain committed to further developing a network of support for Italian language educators throughout the United States, and we remain hopeful that the Republic of Italy will provide financial support and partner with the Italian American community to reinstate the AP Program in Italian in the future."

The College Board developed the AP Italian program in response to efforts undertaken earlier this decade by members of the Committee to Establish the Italian AP Program, including Matilda Cuomo, former first lady of the State of New York, Margaret I. Cuomo, M.D., an advocate of Italian language studies, the national organizations NIAF (the National Italian American Foundation), OSIA (Order Sons of Italy in America) and UNICO. These organizations, with the Republic of Italy, provided funding totaling \$500,000 towards the creation and implementation of the AP Italian Language and Culture program.

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program gives students the opportunity to earn college credit or advanced standing for their high school work and can help students graduate early from some colleges and universities, saving them or their families thousands of dollars in tuition fees. AP courses are offered throughout the United States and provide students who may never travel overseas exposure to Italy's language and culture. AP courses are also offered at American and foreign high schools abroad. Students who already speak Italian can take the AP exam and earn college credit without having participated in the AP Italian course.

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In 2008, the program's third year, student participation in the AP Italian program grew by more than 23 percent over 2007 enrollment.

In April 2008, the College Board announced that it would suspend the program unless outside contributors stepped forward. Between its inception in July 2008 and December 2008, the Italian Language Foundation secured pledges and donations of over \$650,000. These pledges were made despite the turmoil in international financial markets, reflecting the importance of the AP Italian program. The Foundation also created and coordinated Task Forces of Italian language teachers and advocates throughout the country to increase student and school participation in AP Italian beginning with the 2009 academic year.

During the second half of 2008, the College Board worked closely with the Italian Language Foundation to reduce costs and operational deficits that are projected to lessen as student participation increased. The Board developed a strategy through which its financial requirements were reduced from \$4.5 million to \$1.5 million for the academic year of 2009-2010, with underwriting support for future years decreasing as enrollment in the program increased. Although the Italian Language Foundation was able to raise over \$650,000 in contingent commitments, the absence of financial support from the Republic of Italy led to the suspension of the AP Italian Language and Culture program.

“We are deeply disappointed that the AP Program in Italian is being suspended,” said Dr. Cuomo. “We thank the College Board for its good faith efforts to find a way for AP Italian to continue in the future should financial support become available from the Republic of Italy. In the immediate future, we will continue to support Italian language education through professional development workshops and other initiatives because we believe that our children, grandchildren and all American high school students deserve the opportunity to receive first class Italian language education in the United States.”

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The Italian Language Foundation, Inc. was established on July 3, 2008 and received its IRS approval as a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit corporation on August 8, 2008. The Foundation (www.italianlanguagefoundation.com) is dedicated to the support of Italian language education.

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