

iShares press release – September 23, 2011

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/college-savings-month-brings-savings-back-to-school-2011-09-23>

PRESS RELEASE

Sept. 23, 2011, 10:30 a.m. EDT

College Savings Month Brings Savings "Back to School"

More parents saving through 529 plans, survey says

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Sep 23, 2011 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- iShares, a global leader in Exchange Traded Funds and investment manager of Arkansas's iShares 529 Plan, encourages parents and students alike to think twice about their savings strategy in September, recently recognized across the United States as "National College Savings Month."

More parents are feeling the urgency to save for higher education, even as day to day needs remain high on the priority list. The average 4-year public college tuition is up 6.1 percent to \$16,140; 4-year private college is up 4.3 percent to \$36,993, according to The College Board. Assuming such costs increase by 5% a year, the projected cost of college in 15 years will be more than \$100,000 for a 4-year public college and more than \$200,000 for a 4-year private college.

Families are responding by using savings tools like 529 plans, which are savings accounts created just for this purpose: they provide benefits for families that set aside money specifically for higher education.

According to a 2011 survey by the College Savings Foundation, 65 percent of parents are saving for college, and 25 percent of those savers use 529 plans.

"College costs continue to rise, even outpacing inflation costs," said Stephen Jobe, Director of iShares 529 Programs at BlackRock. "And, most families simply cannot meet the financial challenge unless they are setting aside money on a

regular basis. The iShares 529 Plan can be an effective way to keep savings moving towards that important goal of being able to afford to pay for college."

As a savings plan created specifically to help students and their families fund higher education, the iShares 529 Plan has grown rapidly since it was first introduced. In fact, assets in the Plan have more than doubled year-over-year since the Plan's inception in 2007. And because of its flexibility, transparency, and low fees, the Plan was one of just five advisor-sold 529 plans to earn an

"Above Average" rating among 23 advisor sold plans rated in Morningstar's annual 529 Industry Survey in 2010.

Arkansas offers a state income tax deduction of up to \$5,000 a year (\$10,000 for married couples) to families who contribute to an Arkansas-sponsored 529 plan account.(1)

About the iShares 529 Plan: The iShares 529 Plan is a college savings plan sponsored by the State of Arkansas. It is available through financial advisors, and is the only 529 plan with all Exchange Traded Funds as the underlying investments. With Exchange Traded Funds at its core, the iShares 529 Plan breaks new ground in the 529 plan arena by offering attractive benefits, including low expenses and transparency. For more information about the iShares 529 Plan, please visit www.ishares529.com .

About BlackRock: BlackRock is a leader in investment management, risk management and advisory services for institutional and retail clients worldwide. At June 30, 2011, BlackRock's AUM was \$3.659 trillion. BlackRock offers products that span the risk spectrum to meet clients' needs, including active, enhanced and index strategies across markets and asset classes. Products are offered in a variety of structures including separate accounts, mutual funds, iShares(R) (exchange-traded funds), and other pooled investment vehicles. BlackRock also offers risk management, advisory and enterprise investment system services to a broad base of institutional investors through BlackRock Solutions(R). Headquartered in New York City, as of June 30, 2011, the firm has approximately 9,700 employees in 26 countries and a major presence in key global markets, including North and South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East and Africa. For additional information, please visit the Company's

website at www.blackrock.com

About iShares: iShares is the global product leader in exchange traded funds with over 460 funds globally across equities, fixed income and commodities, which trade on 19 exchanges worldwide. The iShares Funds are bought and sold like common stocks on securities exchanges. The iShares Funds are attractive to many individual and institutional investors and financial intermediaries because of their relative low cost, tax efficiency and trading flexibility. Investors can purchase and sell shares through any brokerage firm, financial advisor, or online broker, and hold the funds in any type of brokerage account. The iShares customer base consists of the institutional segment of pension plans and fund managers, as well as the retail segment of financial advisors and high net worth individuals.

For more information about the iShares 529 Plan, contact your financial advisor, call 1-888-529-9552 or visit www.ishares529.com to obtain a Program Description and Participation Agreement which includes investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other important information; read and consider it carefully before investing or sending money. Upromise Investments, Inc. Co-Distributor and Underwriter; BlackRock Fund Distribution Company, Co-Distributor.

If you are not an Arkansas taxpayer, consider before investing whether your or the designated beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other benefits that are only available for investments in such state's qualified tuition program.

The iShares 529 Plan is a college tuition savings program sponsored by the State of Arkansas and is administered by The Arkansas 529 Plan Review Committee (Committee). Upromise Investments, Inc. (UII), and Upromise Investment Advisors, LLC (UIA), serve as the Program Manager and Recordkeeping and Servicing Agent, respectively, with overall responsibility for the day-to-day operations, including marketing and co-distribution of the iShares 529 Plan. BlackRock Fund Distribution Company also has responsibility for co-distribution of the iShares 529 Plan. BlackRock Institutional Trust Company, N.A., serves as Investment Manager of the iShares 529 Plan except for the Savings Portfolio, which is managed by Sallie Mae Bank. The iShares 529 Plan's Portfolios invest in either (i) exchange traded funds; or (ii) a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)-insured omnibus savings account held in trust by the Committee at Sallie Mae Bank. Upromise, Inc., UII, UIA and Sallie Mae Bank are affiliates. Units of the Portfolios are municipal securities, are not exchange

traded funds, and the value of units will vary with market conditions.

#