



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



May 10, 2010

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

On behalf of America's community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) request your support for several key programs that are invaluable to creating higher education opportunity in America as well as preparing the nation's workforce. Representing nearly 1,200 community colleges and the more than 11 million students they educate and train annually, AACCC and ACCT share funding priorities.

The recent economic crisis causes community college enrollments to rise dramatically. Despite budget cuts in virtually every state and locality, double-digit enrollment increases have been the norm as students have sought education and training to improve their job prospects. While determined to meet the needs of these students, community colleges are struggling. Federal funding from last year's economic stimulus legislation has helped, but additional federal investments are greatly needed.

As you consider appropriations for FY 2011, we urge you to give funding priority to the following:

- **The Federal Pell Grant Program**

Pell Grants are essential to providing access to higher education for low-income students. The program now serves more than 8 million students annually, the vast majority of whom come from families with very modest incomes. Community colleges strongly support the Pell Grant program, which each year enables more than 2.5 million of their financially disadvantaged students to pay for tuition, books, and living expenses. AACCC and ACCT urge you to sustain the Pell Grant increases provided in FY 2010 and retire the current Pell Grant program shortfall.

- **\$125 Million for the Career Pathways Innovation Fund**

The Career Pathways Innovation Fund (formerly the Community-Based Job Training Grants program) serves a vital need by expanding the capacity of community colleges to train workers for jobs in high-demand, high-growth industries. This program has provided \$125 million annually to community college collaborative training programs since FY 2005. It has brought together community colleges, local businesses, and the federal workforce investment system to prepare workers for employment in health care, energy, advanced manufacturing, technology and other critical industries. The administration's FY 2011 budget proposed eliminating the program on the grounds that it duplicated the American Graduation Initiative (AGI); however, the AGI was not enacted and the resources provided by the Career Pathways Innovation Fund are badly needed to address local, regional, and national workforce needs. AACCC and ACCT strongly support this program and are seeking at least \$125 million in FY 2011 for this critical workforce training program.

- **Increased Funding for the Strengthening Institutions Program**

The Strengthening Institutions program (Title III-A of the Higher Education Act) provides critical support for colleges that have few resources and serve high proportions of low-income and historically underrepresented populations. Given the rising enrollments of low-income students, Congress should increase funding for the Strengthening Institutions program by \$16 million, to \$100 million in FY 2011.

- **Provide \$1.4 billion for the Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs**

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act programs are the largest source of federal institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. The Perkins Basic State Grants give postsecondary institutions the flexibility to identify local priorities and to fund innovation in occupational education programs. Community colleges use these grants for a variety of purposes, including training first responders and public safety officers; helping students meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improving curricula; purchasing equipment; integrating vocational and academic instruction; and fostering better links between colleges and the business community. We urge Congress to appropriate \$1.4 billion for the Perkins CTE programs, including \$1.3 billion for the Perkins Basic State Grants and at least \$105 million for the Tech Prep program, which should remain a separate line-item.

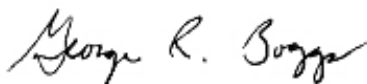
- **Other Important Funding Priorities**

Community colleges strongly support the Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants, Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS), and the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. Similarly, the community colleges recognize the importance of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in serving as the primary vehicle through which the federal government, working with the states and local entities, provides essential job training services. AACC and ACCT also urge Congress to provide funding for several newly authorized Higher Education Opportunity Act programs, including those that promote sustainability, encourage articulation agreements between higher education institutions, promote college persistence, assist veterans, and help students in rural communities.

As efforts continue to address the nation's economic problems, community colleges are working to educate and train students of all ages and backgrounds to reach their potential and to help our country renew its economic strength. Greater strategic investments in federal student aid and institutional support programs can reap huge benefits for our country.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



George R. Boggs
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO