



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

111TH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

BACKGROUND BRIEFING INFORMATION

Enact the American Graduation Initiative

President Obama's American Graduation Initiative (AGI), proposed in July, generated unprecedented attention for community colleges. The central thrust of the AGI is to provide direct assistance to community colleges to help them achieve federally-defined goals, with a particular emphasis on increased number of graduates—some five million more by 2020.

On September 17, 2009, the House of Representatives included most of President Obama's AGI in H.R. 3221, FY 2010 budget "reconciliation" legislation. The legislation passed largely along party lines. Among other things, the legislation requires all institutions to participate in the Federal Direct Loan program by July 1, 2010. The legislation uses the projected budgetary savings from that policy to substantially increase the maximum Pell Grant, provide additional funding for Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and fund the American Graduation Initiative.

Senate action on its version of reconciliation legislation, initially expected early this fall, has become entangled in parliamentary strategies concerning health care reform. Because the Senate can act on only one reconciliation bill each year, and because the Democrats have wanted to retain the use of reconciliation as an option to enact health care legislation (reconciliation bills only need 51 votes to pass the Senate), the education legislation has been held back. The loss of the Senate seat formerly held by Senator Edward Kennedy has added to the uncertainty about how the Senate expects to proceed on budget reconciliation. Community college advocates have had to wait while all this settles.

AACC and ACCT continue to advocate according to well-defined positions on AGI and related issues:

- **General Support for the \$12 billion American Graduation Initiative**

AACC and ACCT support the timely enactment of budget reconciliation legislation that would fund President Obama's American Graduation Initiative and provide sustained increases to the Pell Grant program. We urge that the AGI be funded at the maximum level possible, given the imperative that more students succeed at our institutions, particularly at a time of dramatic enrollment increases and devastating state budget reductions. Our positions on other critical issues in this legislation follow:

- **Colleges Should be Eligible to Compete for Grants Throughout the Entire Period of the AGI**

The AGI's largest program is designed to help community colleges achieve a variety of goals, emphasizing increased numbers of graduates. H.R. 3221 gives grants exclusively to states in years 5-10 of this program, to undertake the "systematic reform" of their community colleges. We believe that institutions of higher education, consortia of such institutions, and states should remain eligible to compete for funding throughout the entire program, and that a national, state-based reform of community colleges is unnecessary. Furthermore, in a considerable number of states, there is no public or private entity that has the expertise, authority, or relationship with its community colleges to engage in their "systematic reform." In addition, requiring states to compete for grants throughout the program will help ensure that state-based applications are developed in close cooperation with their community colleges.

On a related issue, we strongly support planning grants for those colleges needing initial assistance to determine how federal support can most effectively be used. Many institutions lack the institutional infrastructure to immediately evaluate how they can best meet the purposes of the AGI and apply for grants.

- **Reduce the 1:1 Match Required of Community College Grantees in H.R. 3221**

Many community colleges, particularly smaller and rural institutions, simply lack the resources to provide a 1:1 match for the AGI reform grants. While a match of some size is appropriate to ensure institutional commitment to the grant's purposes, the 1:1 match included in the House legislation could preclude those colleges most in need of support from receiving it. The House requirements that federal funds "supplement and not supplant" existing resources and that grants be awarded on a competitive basis will ensure that funds are used effectively.

- **Facilities Funding Should Be Made More Flexible**

We strongly support the \$2.5 billion community college infrastructure funding provided in Section 351 of H.R. 3221. However, the final legislation should permit institutions to use facilities funds as simple matching grants (following the program's principle of grantees generating \$3 of non-federal funds for every \$1 of federal funds received), rather than limiting grants to capital campaigns. This slightly expanded eligibility may help encourage states to provide a greater share of capital funding to community colleges. We strongly support ensuring that federal funds "supplement and not supplant" all non-federal sources of facilities funding.

- **Replace the Institutional Transfer Reporting Language in H.R. 3221 With A Comprehensive, State-Based Approach**

H.R. 3221 requires, "to the maximum extent practicable," that AGI grantees indicate in the course schedule and catalog whether each course is acceptable for transfer credit at a 4-year public college in the state. This language should be replaced with a more comprehensive approach. Rather than limiting the transfer of credit language to institutions receiving AGI grants, the legislation should require that each state that receives a grant under H.R. 3221 (i.e., virtually all states) develop a user-friendly web-based program that comprehensively delineates the various transfer/articulation/equivalency status of courses for all two- and four-year public institutions in the state. All public institutions of higher education in the state should provide a prominent link to that site on their own Web sites. (We expect that other institutions would voluntarily choose to participate in such a system.) This policy could have enormous beneficial impact. We further support the development of a national model that would allow states to share this information, so that transfer options available to students across states lines could easily be shared.

Help Community Colleges Respond to Huge Demand for Education and Training

Although controversial, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has had an undeniably positive impact on many community college campuses. The legislation increased funding to students via Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study, the American Opportunity Tax Credit, and Trade Adjustment Act assistance; provided a range of funding opportunities in areas such as green-jobs training, broadband infrastructure, and health education, and more locally controlled Workforce Investment Act programs; and provided a \$40.1 billion State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) to help state and local governments maintain education services in a time of economic distress. Although the SFSF monies were not distributed to all community colleges, they helped mitigate what would have otherwise been crippling reductions in state and local funding in many places.

The Congressional Democratic leadership is now faced with difficult decisions about whether to extend some type of general economic assistance to governmental entities and/or individuals still suffering from

the ongoing economic distress. While the conditions that gave rise to the first stimulus effort are far from eradicated (even if economic free-fall seems to have been avoided), any type of large-scale federal legislative initiative designed to address the weak economy is certain to be controversial—both because of lingering concerns about the nature of ARRA as well as the gargantuan federal deficit.

Nevertheless, Congress is forging ahead on major measures to impact the economy. In this process, AACC and ACCT hope to influence these efforts to provide support for community colleges and their students. Recent events have provided some basis for optimism.

In December, without any Republican votes, the House passed H.R. 2847, the “Jobs for Main Street Act.” The legislation included \$23.1 billion for an education jobs fund directed towards both K-12 and public postsecondary education. Funds would be distributed to states on the same basis as the ARRA education stabilization funding, and could be used to pay salaries and on-the-job training expenses for existing employees, and to hire new employees to provide educational or related services or for employees engaged in the modernization, renovation and repair of facilities. However, the legislation would require that states use funding to restore previous education cuts (over an undefined period), and further require that, in making any additional education reductions, they not disproportionately reduce funding for higher education or K-12.

Also in December, Rep. John Larson (D-CT), introduced H.R. 4196, the Community College Emergency Funding Act. This legislation authorizes \$700 million in direct support to community colleges, with funds directed to states that have witnessed relatively high losses in employment. AACC and ACCT support this legislation, and hope that its basic principle of viewing community colleges as a catalyst of both short- and longer-term economic prosperity is reflected in any jobs or economic recovery measure that ultimately clears Congress.

The Senate leadership is actively considering a large, broad-based economic measure, although its form is likely to differ significantly from the House’s bill. AACC and ACCT are working to influence this legislation to provide direct support to community colleges.

It is important for community colleges to remind all Capitol Hill offices of the ongoing financing challenges they face. While the precise form and level of assistance that may be made available to community colleges through proposed new spending legislation is unclear, several compelling justifications for this support include:

- Community colleges are tried and true economic engines that make direct and virtually immediate impact on their local economies.
- Community colleges deliver quality education at a far lower cost than any other sector of postsecondary education—for example, at about only 60% of the amount spent at public four-year institutions.
- Community colleges are experiencing dramatic surges in enrollment, which clearly reflects unprecedented reliance on their programs. According to a recent AACC survey, over just the last two years (fall 2007 to fall 2009), credit enrollments at community colleges increased by almost 17%.
- Community colleges have been subject to deep funding reductions in almost every state, causing colleges to stretch services to the limit and, in many places, turn students away from their doors.

As always, locally oriented examples are the most effective in persuading legislators of the need for support. Congressional offices also remain eager to hear about how ARRA monies have been used on campuses.

Increase the Federal Pell Grant Maximum

For community college students, the Federal Pell Grant program remains by far the most important student aid program. Pell Grants are now being made to more than eight million students each year, and approximately one-third of these students attend community colleges. Pell Grants represent the federal government's commitment to ensuring that qualified students from all financial backgrounds can attend college. For dependent students, 63% of program funds are awarded to students with family incomes of \$30,000 or less, while 60% of all independent student recipients have incomes of \$15,000 or less. Despite the great increase in college participation over the last three decades, higher education attainment remains highly correlated with income.

Pell Grants play a much more prominent role in community college student financing than in other sectors for two primary reasons. Community college students, on average, have the lowest incomes, and they also pay the lowest average tuitions—in the fall of 2009, \$2,544 for a full-time, full year student. This means that Pell Grants cover more expenses for community college students than those attending other types of institutions. This helps minimize student borrowing; just 10% of all community college students take out Stafford loans.

Community college students continue to have only limited access to the “Campus-Based” (Federal Work-Study, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Perkins Loans programs) funding. Due to arcane and archaic distribution formulas, community college students receive only 9% of these program funds. The programs continue to be heavily tilted towards students attending four-year colleges.

For these and other reasons, community colleges place special focus on the Pell Grant program. Program financing is currently under acute stress because of the surge of students attending college, especially community colleges, and because students enrolling now have greater financial need. In addition, recent Congressional actions have expanded program eligibility and increased the maximum grant. A massive “shortfall” has resulted, since the demand has far exceeded the projected program costs.

For this fiscal year, community colleges are supporting efforts to increase the Pell Grant maximum to \$5,710. In its FY 2011 budget, the Administration is proposing to make the Pell Grant program a full entitlement, like Medicare or Social Security, thereby removing it from the annual appropriations process. The odds of this being achieved this year seem long.

Pending FY 2010 education budget reconciliation legislation would automatically increase the Pell Grant maximum over the previous year by the Consumer Price Index plus 1%. These increases would build on the Pell Grant maximum of \$5,550 that has been enacted for FY 2010, for the award year beginning this July 1.

It is important to remember, however, that these automatic increases as well as the SAFRA legislation would likely prelude increases greater than the CPI plus 1%. For all these reasons, community college advocates need to continue to emphasize how essential the Pell Grant program is to the ability of needy students to enroll in and succeed at their institutions. It is especially important to communicate this message given the overall freeze on domestic discretionary spending proposed by President Obama, which will put great fiscal pressure on the Pell Grants as well as the broad array of discretionary non-defense programs.

Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act

Congress and the Administration have stated their intention to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) early in 2010, although the authorization expired at the end of 2003. The increased focus on jobs may provide the impetus necessary to reach final passage this year. Some Senate staffers have indicated that there may be a draft Senate WIA reauthorization bill circulated in the first two weeks of February, while timing in the House is less clear. Early indications are that the Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate will strive to craft bipartisan legislation, but the House Democrats are freer to chart their own course should they choose.

Community colleges bring two interrelated basic messages to the WIA reauthorization discussion. First, the federal workforce development system should move away from its “work-first” orientation and focus much more on providing workers the postsecondary education and training they need in today’s economy, especially those with only basic skills. This will require innovations, such as sector-based strategies and regional approaches to service delivery, and much better alignment between numerous programs, including occupational training, adult basic education, postsecondary education, and others. WIA should, in essence, be seen as the next phase of the Administration’s higher education agenda after the American Graduation Initiative.

Second, community colleges should be viewed as true partners in the workforce development system. Reforms to governance and planning, delivery of training services, and other modifications of the system should prioritize the essential role of community colleges in reaching the overarching goals for the system outlined above. However, many community colleges are treated like vendors, rather than partners, in the current system.

The following specific recommendations for WIA reauthorization reflect the above principles:

- **Authorize and Expand the Career Pathways Innovation Fund:** Improving community college training capacity and training more workers for high-demand, high-growth industries are the basic purposes of the Career Pathways Innovation Fund, which succeeds the Community-Based Job Training Grants. This program should also serve as a model for sectoral strategies that are incorporated elsewhere in WIA and other workforce development programs.
- **Ease the Reporting Burden for Eligible Training Providers:** Public institutions of higher education, whose programs are monitored for quality through accreditation, state licensure and other state and federal programs, should be deemed automatically eligible to provide services to WIA participants.
- **Increase the Alignment between Adult Basic Education, Workforce Training and Postsecondary Education:** The nation requires an unprecedented number of people to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Achieving these goals will require a multi-faceted effort on the parts of institutions, states, and the federal government. This effort will only succeed if we are effective in reaching out to populations that are currently underrepresented in postsecondary education. Congress has a significant opportunity to assist this effort by providing support for increased linkages between adult basic education (ABE) and postsecondary education. The ABE to postsecondary “pipeline” is vital to achieving the postsecondary participation rates that will be necessary to maintaining the nation's economic standing. In addition, ABE must be seen as a vital element of occupational training, and vice-versa.

Extend and Improve Higher Education Tax Incentives /American Opportunity Tax Credit

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) made significant changes to the \$1,800 Hope Scholarship tax credit, but only for tax years 2009 and 2010. Therefore, the new American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) needs to be extended in 2010. The Administration has now proposed making the AOTC permanent and indexing to inflation the credit. This development presents an excellent opportunity to alter the credit to better assist community college students. The good news is that the AOTC represents a dramatic improvement over the Hope Scholarship tax credit, along the lines that had long been advocated by AACC and ACCT. To that extent, a simple extension of the AOTC is far preferable to allowing the return to the Hope tax credit, which will occur absent Congressional action. The AOTC is preferable to the Hope tax credit for the following reasons:

- It provides a \$2,500 tax credit, compared to \$1,800 under the Hope program. Furthermore, the credit's basic eligibility formula (100% of the student's first \$2,000 of eligible expenses are covered, then 25% of the next \$2,000), is more advantageous to students attending low-cost institutions than the Hope tax credit formula.
- It extends AOTC eligibility to "course materials," which includes books and other related course expenditures. This expansion is a longstanding community college priority and will result in hundreds of thousands of community college students being eligible for hundreds of dollars in additional benefits—a major policy improvement from the community college perspective.
- It makes 40% of a student's calculated credit refundable. Under refundability, if a student or the student's family has a calculated AOTC that exceeds their tax liability, the excess amount is returned to the taxpayer, in a process similar to a tax refund.

In addition to seeking an extension of the AOTC, AACC and ACCT have the following tax policy objectives:

- Under both the AOTC and Hope tax credits, a student's eligible expenses are reduced by any grant aid amounts received. This framework has the perverse effect of preventing most Pell Grant recipients from also receiving a tax credit, and is therefore unacceptable. The law needs to be changed so that, at a minimum, any Pell Grant amounts received are excluded from being counted against a student's eligible tax credit expenses.
- College expenses that the credit covers need to be further expanded. Community colleges believe that all the expenses currently covered by the federal student financial aid programs (as defined in the Higher Education Act) should be covered by the credit. This would add substantial cost to the credit, and so, at a minimum, a transportation allowance, which is so critical for community college students, should be included.
- The tax credit needs to be focused on students who truly need federal assistance to attend college. The AOTC extends full eligibility to students to families earning up to \$160,000 a year and only fully phases out at \$180,000 (which is more than 3.5 times average U.S. family income), and the

Administration is proposing to index these amounts to inflation. However, some colleges have become so expensive and such a burden on family finances that efforts will very likely be made to expand AOTC eligibility UP the income scale. AACC and ACCT oppose these efforts. All available research shows a strong correlation between higher family income and increased college persistence. The AOTC should reflect the national priority of helping those students who are least likely to complete college.

The debate on the AOTC will likely take place amidst a heated debate on the extension of the 2001 tax cuts, the mounting federal debt, and a desire to respond to widespread economic anxiety. The exact timing and parameters of this debate are unclear.

Strengthen the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act Programs

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides federal support for career and technical education (CTE) programs by authorizing funds for postsecondary institutions, states, and local school districts. Perkins CTE programs are the largest federal source of institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge career and technical education programs.

The Perkins Act gives postsecondary institutions the flexibility to identify local priorities and use the Basic State Grants to fund innovation in occupational education programs. Community colleges use funds 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.

In his FY 2011 budget, President Obama proposes to consolidate the Tech Prep program into the Basic State Grants. AACC and ACCT fought to maintain Tech Prep as a separate program in the last Perkins reauthorization, fearing that such a consolidation would lead to decreased funding over time. The Perkins CTE programs provide an essential source of funding for community college career and technical education programs. The final FY 2010 appropriations bill froze funding for the Perkins Basic State Grants at \$1.16 billion and Perkins Tech Prep at \$102.9 million. AACC and ACCT support increasing the total funding to \$1.4 billion for the Perkins CTE programs.

Enhance Funding for Higher Education and Training Priorities

President Obama's FY 2011 budget, released on February 1st, calls for increased funding for Pell Grants and makes significant investments in community colleges under the proposed American Graduation Initiative. The Administration's budget blueprint also includes proposals to increase funding for minority-serving institutions and for adult education, while level funding or cutting several programs that community colleges value.

Community colleges and their students recognize the importance of the federal student financial aid programs to expand access to postsecondary education and increase college completion. In addition to the Pell Grant program, community college students utilize the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work-Study, and Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) grants. The Obama Administration's FY 2011 budget includes an increase of the Pell Grant maximum by \$160 above the FY 2010 maximum Pell award. Funding for other key student aid programs, such as SEOG

and Federal Work Study, would be level funded. The Administration has proposed eliminating LEAP and funding the TRIO and GEAR UP programs, which also help low-income, first-generation college students prepare for, enroll, and graduate from college, at the FY 2010 levels.

In addition to student financial assistance, there is a tremendous need for increased investments in direct institutional aid to those colleges that serve a disproportionate number of minority, low-income, and first-generation college students. Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act provide grant funds under the Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III-A), the Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Program, the Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program (Title V), and other programs directed at those institutions serving other specialized populations.

The Administration's FY 2011 budget recognizes the need of minority-serving institutions and proposes increased funding for the Strengthening Institutions (up \$4.2 million, to \$88.2 million); HBCUs (an increase of \$13.3 million, to \$279.9); and PBIs (a modest increase of \$500 thousand, to \$11.3 million). The president's budget also would boost funding for the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions by \$5.9 million, to \$123.3 million. AACC and ACCT continue to advocate for funding increases for these critical programs.

The Career Pathways Innovation Fund (formerly the Community-Based Job Training Grants (CBJTG) program) serves a vital national 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. Over the years, it has brought together community colleges, local businesses, and the federal workforce investment system to prepare workers for such industries as health care, construction, advanced manufacturing, and technology. Unfortunately, the Administration believes that the program is duplicative of the American Graduation Initiative and has therefore called for its elimination in the FY 2011 budget request. AACC and ACCT strongly recommend that the Career Pathways Innovation Fund be preserved and funded at \$125 million in FY 2011.

Another priority program for community colleges is the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. The ATE program serves as the primary source of federal support for technician education, an often overlooked aspect of the STEM workforce, but a crucial one. ATE provides students with the core knowledge and skills required by the industries of our present and future economy, such as biotechnology, alternative energy and nanotechnology to name a few. It is equally prized by the large number of business partners that work with ATE grantees and employ their graduates. The ATE program has also played a vital role in the preparation of future K-12 science and math teachers. AACC and ACCT support the president's goal of increasing funding for this essential program to \$100 million by FY 2013. The Administration's FY 2011 budget request calls for level funding of ATE at \$64 million, when it should be increased by at least \$12 million.

Pass the DREAM Act

Community colleges continue to press for enactment of the DREAM Act. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act (H.R. 1751, S. 729) is perhaps the single most politically popular of the many, and usually contentious, immigration issues. It provides a way for young people who were brought into this country by others, have lived in the U.S. for an extended period of time, and consider themselves American to become more fully integrated into the society. Despite longtime residence in the U.S., because of their undocumented status, many of these individuals face tremendous difficulties paying for college (and sometimes enrolling at all) and finding employment. The DREAM

Act would alleviate this situation by granting certain undocumented students conditional legal resident status. These students would be able to achieve permanent legal status by completing two years of higher education or military service within six years. From there, they would be on a path to citizenship. Only students who were brought into the country before they were 16 years old and who have resided in the country for at least five years at the time the DREAM Act is enacted would be eligible.

The DREAM Act also repeals a provision of federal law that essentially bars states from granting in-state tuition to undocumented students. Current federal law states that any residency-based benefit extended to undocumented students must also be provided to any U.S. citizen. Ten states have circumvented this provision by extending in-state tuition to undocumented students based on factors other than residency; typically, graduation from a high school within a state.

The DREAM Act is expected to be a component of soon-to-be unveiled comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) legislation. Currently, CIR is the legislative vehicle to which the DREAM Act will be attached, for better and for worse. However, advocates for the DREAM Act, many of whom are also ardent supporters of CIR legislation, are working hard to position the bill to move as a stand-alone legislation should CIR stall again later this year. For this reason, getting as many Members of Congress to cosponsor the DREAM Act now is vitally important.

Support Community College Sustainability Initiatives

Clean energy legislation remains a top priority for the Obama Administration and for Congress. While the economy and health care reform have dominated the news, efforts have continued to improve energy efficiency and energy independence. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided a huge infusion of federal resources for green jobs training and technology. Last year, the House approved an energy bill, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009; the Senate is still working on its legislation.

Of particular interest to community colleges, bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate that specifically focus on the critical role community colleges have in preparing the nation's workforce for 21st century energy jobs. Last Spring, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced S.1097, the Sustainable Energy Training Program for Community Colleges, calling for the creation of a new program at the Department of Energy, in coordination with the Department of Labor. The legislation would authorize \$100 million for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2015 for competitive grants to community colleges to provide workforce training and education in alternative energy, energy efficient construction, sustainable energy technologies, energy conservation, and sustainable agriculture. Representative Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM-3) introduced a similar bill, H.R. 3731, the Community College Energy Training Act of 2009, last October, with dozens of co-sponsors.

As the demand for alternative and renewable energy increases, the need for more skilled workers grows. Community colleges produce highly qualified energy technicians that help with the fabrication, installation, and maintenance of wind turbines, solar panels, and other key components needed for wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass energy production and distribution. The colleges also educate and train individuals for numerous other industries, including "green jobs" in energy efficient construction, energy audits, nanotechnology, water conservation, and sustainable agriculture.

Additionally, Congress directed the Department of Education to include sustainability grants as one of the FY 2010 priorities for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). The University Sustainability Program (USP) Grants, created during the most recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, will provide funding for 2-year and 4-year colleges, universities, and nonprofit

entities collaborating with colleges to establish sustainability programs. These sustainability programs are expected to integrate campus operations with multidisciplinary academic programs.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization

The ESEA, dubbed “No Child Left Behind” by the Bush Administration, is soon due for reauthorization. A crowded legislative agenda, compressed election-year schedule, and a waning desire to tackle controversial issues in the wake of the health care debate has made the exact timing for its consideration unclear, with some saying that it will not occur this year.

Whenever it does see legislative action, there is general consensus that the next iteration of NCLB needs to provide more support for middle schools and high schools. Dropout rates continue to grow and the increasing percentages of students requiring remedial education have brought about an increased discussion on college readiness. Research has shown that individuals who take remedial classes are more likely not to finish college and take longer to complete their higher education. Lawmakers and policymakers are expected to scrutinize and examine ways to make high schools more effective, creative and adaptive to the needs of students. The Obama Administration’s higher education agenda is another major factor that will focus NCLB reauthorization discussions on these issues.

With the reauthorization of NCLB, it is now time for community colleges to become active partners with K-12 education systems in preparing students for postsecondary education. Congress should require K-12 education systems to work with their counterparts in post-secondary education to align their curriculum. Community colleges have continually experienced the negative side of remedial education. Alignment of curriculum would bring community colleges and higher education to the table with K-12.

As Congress works to finalize the next iteration of NLCB, community colleges also support the following positions:

- Create a competitive state grant program to facilitate the creation and expansion of early college high school initiatives, as in the Fast Track to College Act (H.R. 1578, S. 627) or the \$100 million College Pathways and Accelerated Learning Program proposed by the Administration in its FY 2011 budget.
- Make community colleges active participants in any new teacher education initiatives that emerged from this reauthorization, particularly in light of high percentage of K-12 teachers who receive their initial preparation at community colleges.