

2014 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Maintain the Pell Grant Program

Each year, Pell Grants help 3.35 million low- and moderate-income community college students meet the cost of tuition, course materials, and living expenses. 37% of all community college credit students receive a Pell Grant. The program must be funded to trigger automatic inflationary increases, and further limitations in student eligibility should be rejected. Community colleges strongly support immediate restoration of eligibility for the year-round Pell Grant and for “ability-to-benefit” students.

Sustain and Enhance Federal Funding for Community Colleges and Students

Congress should fully redress last year’s sequestration and reinstate funding for community college priority programs that were not fully restored in FY 2014 appropriations legislation. These programs include: Workforce Investment Act job training; Carl D. Perkins Basic State Grants; and HEA Title III and Title V programs. Additionally, for FY 2015 Congress should at least maintain funding for Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; Federal Work Study; TRIO; GEAR UP; and the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. Increased funding for adult basic education, which remains at its post-sequester level in FY 2014, should be a top priority.

Reauthorize and Improve the Higher Education Act

In reauthorizing the Higher Education Act (HEA), Congress must recognize the unique nature, mission and contributions of community colleges. Numerous changes, to the HEA are needed: 1) States must be encouraged to maintain higher education funding. 2) Federal student aid programs should be simplified and eligibility should be expanded for ‘nontraditional’ students. 3) Consumer information metrics must be made more useful and accurate, and Congress should remove the prohibition on a federal student unit data system. 4) Cohort default rates must factor in low rates of borrowing at community colleges, and institutions should be given more authority to reduce the risk of student indebtedness and default.

Strengthen Workforce Development and Extend the TAACCT Program

Congress should reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 2014, prioritizing the role that community colleges play in educating American’s workforce. This should be achieved, in part, by authorizing the Community College to Career Fund; ensuring that community colleges are members of state and local workforce investment boards; authorizing more contracts between workforce investment boards and colleges; and making programs at public institutions of higher education automatically eligible for training funding. Additionally, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) should provide increased support for the transition from ABE to postsecondary education.

The first three years of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act Community College and Career Training Grant Program (TAACCCT) have been extremely successful. The program delivers high quality, relevant training to TAA-eligible and other workers. It encourages new program delivery and has generated cooperative agreements between a wide range of institutions and business. The final year (FY 2014) of dedicated funding should be awarded as scheduled and Congress should consider continued funding for this or a similar program after FY 2014.

Enhance the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act

In reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins CTE Act, Congress should increase its efforts to focus on high-quality programs closely linked to industry that produce college- and career-ready students. This can largely be achieved by increasing the stringency of funding applications, rather than instituting competitive grant funding as the President has proposed. Perkins, WIA and other federal accountability reporting requirements should be identical wherever possible, and Congress should consider the Voluntary Framework of Accountability metrics as a reporting model.

Help Community Colleges Serve Veteran Students

Community colleges need additional support in their traditional and essential role of assisting both veterans and active duty service members. Ample funding for the Centers of Excellence for Veterans Student Success and Veterans Upward Bound programs are priorities for community colleges. Congress should find a federally-based solution to provide in-state-tuition for veterans attending public institutions without shifting the cost fully onto states and institutions.

Pass the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act provides a path to legal status for thousands of students without documentation who were brought to the U.S. as children, and worked their way through high school. The DREAM Act returns to states the decision of whether to extend in-state tuition to students without documentation. The Senate-passed immigration reform bill contains the DREAM Act, and Congress must enact legislation that allows these students to be full contributors to our economy and society.

Improve Higher Education Tax Provisions

Federal higher education tax provisions provide substantial funding to college students. Community colleges enthusiastically support H.R. 3393, the Student and Family Tax Simplification Act, which streamlines existing tax credits and deductions into an enhanced version of the existing American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC). The new AOTC would increase refundability, and make it easier for community college students to receive the maximum credit.

Improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

As Congress reauthorizes this key education statute it needs to consider the critical role that community colleges play in supporting the nation's K-12 system. Community colleges look to partner with the federal government to offer more dual enrollment programs and early college high schools for targeted populations. The ESEA should better support community colleges' prominent role in teacher preparation. Additionally, Congress should focus on the importance of national college and career readiness to help reduce the need for remedial education and improve student time-to-degree.