



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



May 7, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

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 essential to creating higher education opportunity and preparing the nation's workforce. Representing nearly 1,200 community college presidents and their trustees, AACCC and ACCT have shared funding priorities.

Community college enrollments have grown dramatically during the past several years, with students looking to enhance their skills and career readiness and workers seeking retraining. However, these enrollments have come at a time of deep local and state budget cuts. While determined to meet the needs of the millions of students who enroll each year, community colleges are struggling. Federal funding for both student aid and institutional support remains critical.

As you consider appropriations for FY 2013, we urge you to give funding priority to the following:

- **The Federal Pell Grant Program**
Pell Grants are essential to providing access to and completion of higher education for low-income students. The program now serves more than 9 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 3.4 million of their financially disadvantaged students to pay for tuition, books, transportation, and living expenses. Last year, the \$5,550 maximum grant was preserved, but at a huge cost. Thousands of students lost their eligibility, including those who lack a high school diploma or GED. Congress should continue to preserve the appropriated base of \$4,860 for the Pell Grant, which combined with mandatory funding, will produce a maximum award of \$5,645 in award year 2013-14.
- **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 and the greater competition for these grants, Congress should increase funding for the Strengthening Institutions program by \$20 million, to \$100 million, in FY 2013.

- **Preserve Funding 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 vital programs such as 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 at minimum a funding level that matches that of FY 2012 for the Perkins CTE programs.

- **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), international education, and the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. Similarly 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.

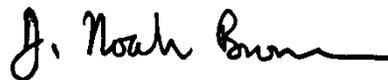
As efforts continue to address the nation's economic problems, community colleges are working to educate and train students and workers of all ages and backgrounds to reach their full potential. These strategic investments in federal student aid and institutional support programs are vital to our nation's long-term economic strength.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO