

# 2017 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## SUPPORT THE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

More than 2.8 million low- and moderate-income community college students receive Pell Grants each year. The grants reach more than one-third of all community college credit students and help them pay for tuition, course materials, transportation, and living expenses. In conjunction with low-cost tuition, Pell Grants are the building block of community college access and success.

- Reinstatement of the Year-Round Pell Grant.
- Protect the Pell Grant surplus, and utilize surplus funds to reinvest in the program.
- Fully reinstate eligibility for “ability-to-benefit” students.
- Allow students to receive Pell Grants for a total of 14 full-time equivalent semesters.
- Allow additional access to Pell Grants for short-term workforce-oriented programs.

## INVEST IN EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

Investments in higher education and workforce training pay significant economic and social dividends. It is imperative that Congress provide adequate funding in these areas and reexamine the existing funding caps for nondefense programs.

Request modest funding increases for key community college programs. These include the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; Federal Work Study; Carl D. Perkins Basic State Grants; the Strengthening Institutions Program and programs supporting Minority Serving Institutions; Adult Basic Education State Grants; and the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education program.

Proposals to invest in our nation’s infrastructure have the potential to create thousands of new jobs. Employers report shortages of qualified workers for a wide range of jobs in construction, welding, HVAC, engineering, information technology, and other infrastructure-related fields. Any federal infrastructure investment plan should include funding to support partnerships between community colleges and businesses to train workers in high-need fields.

**Year-Round Pell Grants provide invaluable aid to students seeking to stay in school and progress more rapidly toward attainment of a credential.**

**Year-Round Pell Grants offer students much-needed flexibility in accessing financial aid.**

**Don’t raid the Pell Grant surplus. Utilize the surplus to benefit students and reinvest in the Pell Grant program**

**Invest in human capital to improve and sustain global competitiveness.**

**Congress must maintain federal investments in higher education. By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require postsecondary education or training.**

**Plans to invest in our nation’s infrastructure should support additional training capacity at our nation’s community colleges for workers in high-need fields such as construction.**

## **REAUTHORIZE THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT**

The Higher Education Act (HEA) is the highest-priority authorizing legislation for community colleges. Priorities include:

**Loans** – Limit borrowing based on enrollment intensity and degree and program type. Revise student loan cohort default rates by incorporating the percentage of students who borrow. Simplify and consolidate Direct Loan repayment options with low-debt borrowers in mind. Enhance student loan servicing.

**Risk Sharing** – Oppose new financial penalties or sanctions tied to loan repayment rates or defaults.

**Transparency and Measurements** – Create a national student unit record data system to effectively track student enrollment, completion, and earnings information.

**Additional HEA Priorities** – Ensure maintenance of adequate state funding. Simplify the FAFSA to increase application completion. Reduce regulatory burden on campuses.

## **SUPPORT DACA STUDENTS**

Provide stability to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) students. The bipartisan BRIDGE Act would provide temporary relief from deportation and employment authorization to DACA recipients or DACA-eligible individuals for three years. The bill establishes a statutory basis for eligible individuals to continue studying or working while Congress works on a permanent solution.

## **REAUTHORIZE THE PERKINS ACT**

Reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act to maintain program flexibility, allowing community colleges to address local needs while strengthening CTE programs. Enhance student pathways that promote college and career readiness and strengthen ties between community colleges and local businesses. Align reporting requirements for Perkins, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and other federal programs.

## **SUPPORT STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS THROUGH THE TAX CODE**

Streamline higher education tax benefits and enhance the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) for community college students and others most in need of support. In particular, community college students who receive Pell Grants should not be precluded from receiving an AOTC, as commonly occurs under current law. Congress also should focus benefits on students and families who are middle- or low-income, including enhancing AOTC refundability.

**Support community college access and success by enhancing student-aid programs, reducing regulatory burdens, and bolstering institutional support.**

**Improve accountability measures to accurately reflect community college student patterns of enrollment and success, including transfer rates.**

**Reject arbitrary and costly proposals such as “risk sharing” and bright-line federal accreditation standards that would raise tuition and reduce student services.**

**Pass the BRIDGE Act to provide stability for DACA students while Congress works on a long-term policy.**

**Support highly effective CTE programs by emphasizing connections between Perkins recipients and the businesses and industries that they serve.**

**Streamline and align CTE performance indicators with WIOA.**

**Reform the AOTC to ensure that all community college Pell Grant recipients can also receive the tax credit.**

**Increase AOTC refundability.**