

Last spring, each chamber of Congress set out to pass legislation focused on American competitiveness in the scientific and technology markets. Each chamber has since passed a bill – now collectively known as the Bipartisan Innovation Act. However, the two versions of the bill differ from one another. Congress has entered what is known as a conference process to develop one bill to send to the President for signature. This fact sheet addresses the areas of each bill of interest to community colleges.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the House of Representatives passed [H.R. 4521 – America COMPETES Act of 2022](#). The bill passed [222-210](#) with one Republican joining Democrats for passage.

The House bill included an amendment addressing a key community college priority: expanding Pell Grant eligibility to short-term programs (fewer than 600 hours or 15 weeks). The amendment also included another community college priority, the College Transparency Act. Together, these two pieces formed [H.Amdt. 169](#), which passed [238-193](#). (See Sec 90305 and 90306, respectively, below.) Twenty-four Republicans joined 214 Democrats to vote for the amendment, with seven Democrats opposed.

The COMPETES Act is the companion bill to [S. 1260 – United States Innovation and Completion Act of 2021 \(USICA\)](#), which passed in the Senate last June. While this bill passed with strong bipartisan support – [68 to 32](#) – it did not include amendments of the type offered to the House bill.

Now, the House and the Senate will work in a conference committee to resolve the differences between the two bills. This conference committee is composed of elected officials appointed by House and Senate leadership within specific jurisdictions. Below are the representatives from the House Education & Labor and Senate HELP committees.

House Education and Labor Committee Members named to the Conference Committee:

- Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.)
- Rep. Joe Morelle (D-N.Y.)
- Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.)

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Members named to the Conference Committee:

- Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.)
- Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)
- Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)
- Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.)
- Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)

## **SUMMARY SECTION OF INTEREST FROM HOUSE COMPETES ACT**

### JOB TRAINING FEDERAL PELL GRANTS (Division J, Title III, Sec. 90305)

This section was added to the bill by House Amendment 169 and attaches a version of the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act to the legislation. The JOBS Act allows for Pell Grants to be used to fund short-term programs

ACCT supports the inclusion of short-term programs for Pell Grant eligibility to create access to more postsecondary pathways.

Under the amendment, short-term programs that deliver “at least 150 clock hours of instruction time over a period of at least 8 weeks” will be eligible for students to receive Pell Grants. In order to be eligible, the institutions providing the programs must be public or non-profit and the programs cannot be online.

#### Eligible Job Training Programs

- Provides at least 150 but not more than 600 clock hours of instructional time over at least 8 weeks but not more than 15 weeks
- Provides training in high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industries as determined by:
  - a state or local board,
  - a comprehensive local assessment via the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education of 2006,
- Is a program provided through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,
- Provides a student with a recognizable and stackable credential that is portable across employers and geographic regions,
- Provides a student who completes the program with a median increase of 20% of total earnings as compared to total earnings of such students prior to enrolling in the program

- Displays prominently on its website and provides a written disclosure to applicants the information such as tuition and fees, completion rates, employment rates, earnings information, among others
- Provides a recognized credential sufficient to meet hiring and licensure requirements
- Has been in operation at least one year prior to becoming eligible
- Does not exceed the required clock hours to meet state licensure by more than 50%
- Sets students on path for additional certificate or degree programs
- Delivered at least partially in person
- Provided at least 50% by the eligible institution of higher education
- Includes student advising related to career goals
- Meets gainful employment program requirements
- May be offered as part of a career pathway program as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Eligible programs must be approved by the Secretary of Education in conjunction with a certification from the State board in which the program is located.

The Secretary will additionally calculate the impact of the program on total earnings by comparing the total earnings of students enrolled six months prior to the program and the total earnings of the students who complete the program six months after finishing.

#### COLLEGE TRANSPARENCY (Division J, Title III, Sec. 90306)

This section was added to the bill by House Amendment 169 and attaches the College Transparency Act (CTA) to the legislation. This provision requires colleges to collect student data while maintaining privacy protections for individual students and submit it to the U.S. Department of Education. The newly collected data would focus not only enrollment, but persistence, transfer, and completion metrics as well as the ability to disaggregate by demographic groups such as ethnicity, gender, and age.

ACCT supports CTA, particularly because it could lead to more meaningful ways to measure success at community colleges, where students frequently transfer before completing their programs.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKFORCE TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM (Division J, Title IV, Sec 90401)

This section authorizes the Improving Minority Participation and Careers Telecommunications (IMPACT) Act. The goal of the IMPACT Act is to create a workforce training program for the telecommunications sector. The Department of Labor, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce and the Secretary of Education, would administer the \$100 million program. Grants can be used to hire and/or train faculty, design or customize curriculum, fund scholarships, recruit/enroll students, among other activities. Eligible entities to apply for grants include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUS), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in partnership with industry, apprenticeship programs, or “community colleges with experience providing workforce development activities for individuals seeking employment in the telecommunications industry.”

SUPPORTING APPRENTICESHIP COLLEGES ACT OF 2021 (Division J, Title IX)

This section creates two grant programs: the Community Outreach Grant Program and the Student Support Grant Program for Expanded Academic Advising. For each program, the bill authorizes \$5 million in funding and maximum awards of \$500,000. The grants are to be used for outreach and advising, respectively, related to construction and manufacturing-oriented registered apprenticeship programs, of which community colleges can be sponsors. Eligible entities to apply for grants are institutions of higher education meeting the definition of “a construction and manufacturing-oriented apprenticeship college.”

Additionally, Division J, Title I updates the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND CAREER TRAINING (Division K, Title IV, Subtitle C, Sec 101302)

This section makes adjustment to the TAACCCT program, including allowing for consortia of institutions to apply together and requiring that 15% of received funds be used for student support services.

## **SUMMARY SECTION OF INTEREST FROM SENATE USICA BILL**

The Senate USICA bill additionally focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education and career pathways but has fewer programs specifically involving community colleges. Of note, the bill includes the Telecommunications Workforce Training Grant program mentioned above as well as some other higher education provisions not specific to community colleges.

However, USICA does not include the reauthorization of the National Apprenticeship Act, the Supporting Apprenticeship Colleges Act, the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Community Colleges and Career Training program, or the short-term Pell provision and College Transparency Act provisions (which were passed as an amendment to the House COMPETES Act).