



Getting Ready for HEA Reauthorization

Expanding Pell Grants to cover short-term programs is a key focus for community colleges.

By Jee Hang Lee

THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEES of the 116th Congress have wasted no time in working to educate new members and get ready for a possible reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), which has been pending since 2014. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, led by Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), has been working on reauthorization by holding hearings and soliciting public comments on a range of issues, including financial aid, accountability, and accreditation. HEA reauthorization, in particular FAFSA simplification, is a top priority for Sen. Alexander, who announced he would not run for re-election and would retire at the end of the 116th Congress. This puts pressure on Congress to move quickly on the reauthorization ahead of the 2020 election cycle and Sen. Alexander's retirement.

In the House, the Education and Labor Committee, under the new leadership of Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), has had a significant turnover of membership. About half of the committee members are new in the 116th Congress. The House committee is also holding a series of hearings to educate its new members and prepare for the reauthorization bill writing process. Please see the list of Chairman Scott's priorities for HEA in the last issue of *Trustee Quarterly*.

Expanding Pell Grants for Short-Term Programs

One major community college priority is expanding Pell Grant eligibility for short-term programs currently not eligible for Title IV aid. The leading bill on this



issue is the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act S. 839, which was authored by Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.). The current iteration of the bill, introduced in March, would allow students to receive a Pell Grant for short-term programs of at least 150 clock hours. The bill has bipartisan support and strong support from the business community.

The current iteration of the JOBS Act would specifically do the following:

1. Expand Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in rigorous and high-quality short-term skills and job training programs that lead to industry-based credentials and ultimately employment in high-wage, high-skill industry sectors or careers;

2. Ensure that students who receive Pell Grants are earning high-quality postsecondary credentials by requiring that credentials:
 - Are recognized by employers, industry, or sector partnerships; and
 - Align with the skills needs of industries in the state or local economy;
 3. Define eligible job training programs as those providing career and technical education with at least 150 clock hours of instruction over at least 8 weeks;
 4. Award Pell Grants between \$600 and \$3,000, depending on the program's clock hours; and
 5. Only expand Pell Grant eligibility for short-term programs offered at public and non-profit institutions. If the JOBS Act is included in the reauthorization of HEA, however, Congress may choose to allow all institutions of higher education to participate.
- We need community college leaders to advocate on this issue with their legislators

It is important that trustees and college leaders continue to push their support of community college priorities. Make your voice heard by visiting your member of Congress, requesting a meeting on campus, and talking about the pressing issues important to your institution and the community college sector.

and engage with business partners to enlist their support. Additionally, college leaders can support this legislation by inviting their legislators to campus and showcasing the kinds of short-term programs that could become eligible for Pell Grants.

It is important that trustees and college leaders continue to push their support of community college priorities. Make your voice heard by visiting your member of Congress, requesting a meeting on campus, and talking about the pressing issues important to your institution and the community college sector. To keep updated on key legislative items, sign-up for the Latest Action in Washington alerts at publicpolicy@acct.org.



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College Leaders' Recommendations for the Higher Education Act

by Allison Beer

THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE of 50, also known as Forward 50, released its final recommendations for the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization. The group includes community college presidents, trustees, administrators, and financial aid staff.

In early 2018, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) convened the group of college presidents, trustees, and faculty to develop recommendations for Congress to improve the cornerstone federal higher education law. The group released its final recommendations as lawmakers are gearing up for the HEA reauthorization process.

The committee has provided 36 recommendations for higher education policy reform in the areas of: 1) access, 2) accountability, 3) affordability, and

4) transparency. Notably, the committee has recommended several changes to the federal financial aid application process including reducing the number of times a student is required to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and reducing the burden of the verification process. ACCT recently partnered with NASFAA and the Center for American Progress to analyze the viability of a "one-time FAFSA" that would accomplish these goals.

Several community college representatives served on the committee, including:

- Connie Hornbeck, ACCT Board Chair, Iowa Western Community College;
- Victoria Onori Bowman, Mercer County Community College;
- Dean Clark; Southwestern College;
- Caleb Cornelious and Gregory Haile, Broward College;

- Soon Flynn, Austin Community College;
- Angela Johnson, Cuyahoga Community College;
- Anne Kress, Monroe Community College;
- Fred Lokken, Truckee Meadows Community College;
- Yesenia Madas, Brookdale Community College;
- Daniel Phelan, Jackson College; and
- Normah Selleh-Barone, Moraine Valley Community College.



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