

2021 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Fund Community Colleges and Their Students to Meet the Pandemic's Challenges

Provide Stimulus Support to Sustain Students and Colleges Through the Pandemic

Community colleges are extremely grateful for the critical support provided through the CARES Act and the more recent Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act. However, prolonged enrollment losses, pandemic-related student and institutional needs, and deep public funding reductions make additional funding essential. Community colleges join the higher education community in supporting \$97.3 billion in new assistance, using the CRRSA formula that reflects the community college student population. Strict state maintenance-of-effort provisions are essential.

Create a Dedicated Community College Job Training Program

The pandemic's massive economic dislocation has exacerbated the need for a dedicated community college job training program, one that integrates institutional programs with business and local workforce needs. While the ravaged economy still has jobs available for qualified applicants, colleges lack funding to address the situation by themselves. Community colleges call for a \$2 billion investment that builds on the demonstrated success of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, tightly linking training programs to jobs as the economy recovers.

Support Dreamers

Enact the Dream Act

Enact the Dream Act, once and for all, to provide Dreamers with permanent legal status. The Dream Act provides a path to citizenship for undocumented young people, including the thousands of students currently enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Dreamers were brought to the U.S. as minors and frequently have no ties to the countries from which they came. More importantly, they can make substantial contributions to the American economy and society. Dreamers should be able to access Title IV student aid funding.

Focus Student Tax Policy on Those Who Can Benefit Most

End the Taxation of Pell Grants

Currently, Pell Grant awards can be taxed for any amounts that exceed a student's tuition and related expenses. This means that community college students must pay tax on any portion of their Pell Grants that is used to help meet living expenses. Taxing Pell Grants also prevents thousands of community colleges from receiving the full American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), because of unintended interactions between the programs. It is counterproductive to tax benefits provided to those with extremely limited resources.

Additionally, the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit (LLC) should be altered to provide 100% of the first \$2,000 of tuition and fees paid by those taking job-focused training courses at community colleges. The LLC has not lived up to its promise of helping America re-skill.

Invest in Higher Education and Workforce Development in the Appropriations Process

Support Student Access and Success

Increase the Pell Grant maximum award in FY 2022 while protecting the program's reserve fund. Funding increases should also be provided for the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work-Study (FWS), TRIO, GEAR UP, and CCAMPIS programs.

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Increase funding for institutional aid programs, including: Title III-A Strengthening Institutions; Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Tribal Colleges; Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs); Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and other programs serving traditionally underrepresented populations.

Bolster Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Enhance funding for Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants, state grants under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program.

Continue to support dedicated community college funding to expand job training programs in in-demand industries by increasing funding for the Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) program administered by the Department of Labor. The first round of grants demonstrates its impact and colleges anticipate new funding.

Reauthorize the Higher Education Act for Today's Colleges and Students

Work with States to Make Community College Universally Accessible, Promoting Student Success

Establish a federal-state partnership to enhance college affordability and enrollment by creating tuition-free community college. Federal policy should reflect the fact that postsecondary education is now essential to provide family-sustaining wages. States should be incentivized to sustain and enhance their support of higher education as the federal government helps make community college universally available.

An aligned national program to enhance community college student access and success will help ensure increased economic mobility and help sustain economic growth and positively transform higher education.

Support Pell Grants for Students in Short-Term Workforce Programs

Currently, programs must last at least two-thirds of a year to qualify for Pell Grants. Many community colleges programs that are shorter than that result in better jobs for students, but without student aid, cost remains a barrier. Eligibility for shorter-term programs should be established, with safeguards to ensure that only high-quality programs receive support. Community colleges continue to support the JOBS Act.

- Short-term training programs offer opportunities for students to quickly increase their skill level and earning potential.
- Lowering the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility to 150 clock hours will enable more individuals to access training programs for jobs in high-demand fields.

Increase the Pell Grant Maximum

Ensure annual increases to the maximum award using mandatory funding. Pell Grants enable millions of low-income students to pay tuition and fees and other college expenses, and community colleges would have a much different and less diverse student population without the program.

- Increasing the maximum award effectively diminishes the cost of attendance for low-income students, reducing their need to work outside of college and their reliance on federal loans.
- Pell Grants raise postsecondary access and success, reducing the equity gap between low-income students and those with greater financial means.

Invest in Basic Needs Supports for Students

The true cost of attending community college extends beyond the price of tuition. Most community college students experience unmet financial need to pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. Community colleges support policies that allow students to access vital basic needs services.

- Increasing the capacity of community colleges to connect students with supportive services will help ensure students can persist and succeed in their postsecondary pathways.
- Existing federal programs including the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) must be strengthened to meet students' true needs.