

2025 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Support Community Colleges and their Students in Budget Reconciliation

The budget reconciliation process may be used to make substantial changes to federal student aid programs. These programs are central to opportunity and productivity in America. In this process, community colleges urge the following:

Reject Risk-sharing

Community colleges continue to strongly oppose any form of risk-sharing, which negatively impacts colleges that have the fewest resources and serve the most financially needy students. Risk-sharing will not achieve its stated goal of improved institutional outcomes and will have extremely negative impacts on both students and colleges.

Support the Pell Grant Program by:

- Funding Workforce Pell Grants for short-term programs that support entry into the workforce (Details below)
- Ending the taxation of Pell Grant dollars, which is a penalty on low-income students (Details below)
- Maintaining the Pell eligibility formula currently in use
- Using savings to shore up the program's finances and increase the maximum grant

Target resources more efficiently

Any alterations in Title IV programs should focus on maximizing support for students who could not otherwise further their education or training without the federal government's support or those who struggle to repay student loans.

Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development

Support Workforce Pell Grants for Students in Short-Term Programs

Establish Pell Grant eligibility for shorter-term programs, accompanied by rigorous quality standards. Currently, programs must be at least 16 weeks long to be eligible for Pell Grants. This excludes many community college workforce-oriented programs that benefit both students and local businesses. Without Pell grant support, many students cannot afford to participate in these programs. The threshold for Pell Grant eligibility should be shortened to 150 clock hours, as was proposed in the bipartisan Senate legislation the JOBS Act and the House Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act.

Strengthen the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Enhance the national economy by bolstering the role of community colleges in the federal workforce development system. WIOA reauthorization legislation should include authorization of the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program, which has supported community colleges in 35 states over the last six funding cycles. The bipartisan, bicameral compromise that was proposed in the A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWAA) at the end of the 118th Congress included this provision and should be taken up for consideration in the 119th Congress.

Focus Student Tax Policy on Those Who Can Benefit Most

End the Taxation of Pell Grants

Make Pell Grants tax-free. Congress should use planned action on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act through reconciliation to eliminate this penalty on low-income students. Currently, community college students must pay taxes on their Pell Grant dollars that are used toward living expenses. By law, these funds must be used for qualified educational expenses and taxing Pell Grant funds makes it even harder for the lowest-income community college students to succeed.

Modify the American Opportunity Tax Credit

The \$2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) should be altered so that Pell Grant awards are not counted against a student's eligibility. This change would help hundreds of thousands of low-income community college students receive the credit each year; community college students are generally the only college students where Pell Grants render them ineligible for AOTC.

Join the House Community College Caucus

Contact the leaders of this bipartisan caucus led by Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Joe Courtney (D-CT) to join.

Fund Key Education and Workforce Programs

Support Student Access and Success

Boost the Pell Grant maximum award \$200 Pell Grants enable millions of low-income community college students to pay tuition and fees and meet other college expenses and are the foundation of all other student aid. Increasing the maximum award promotes affordability and student success for low-income students, while reducing their need to borrow.

Funding increases should also be provided for key financing and student support programs such as

- Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
- Postsecondary Student Success
- Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students programs
- Federal Work-Study
- TRIO
- GEAR UP

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Increase funding for institutional aid programs including Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Title III-A Strengthening Institutions; Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); Tribal Colleges; and other programs serving traditionally underrepresented populations. Robust funding for these programs will help reduce achievement gaps at community colleges and other institutions.

Bolster Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Continue to support community college training programs that lead to in-demand jobs by increasing funding for the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program at the Department of Labor, now its sixth year.

Strengthen Accountability and Transparency

Utilize Accountability and Transparency Policies that Reflect Needs of Community Colleges

Enact the College Transparency Act (CTA) to create a federal student-level data network to generate accurate, meaningful data on postsecondary outcomes, including post-completion earnings. Enact the College Transparency Act (CTA). Ensure that cohort default rates or any loan-driven accountability measures reflect the incidence of student borrowing and the student body generally. These proposals will provide accountability and transparency that supports the community college mission while maintaining integrity in the student aid programs.

Farm Bill

Support Rural Community Colleges

Provide federal funding streams to community colleges to support rural economic development, particularly in the agricultural sector. Rural community colleges play an increasing role in training workers to support agriculture and related fields. Providing grants to assist community colleges in developing and upscaling agricultural and natural resources programs would support the growing need for a highly skilled agricultural workforce. This could be achieved by including the Community College Agriculture Advancement Act introduced in the 118th Congress in the next farm bill legislation.

Improve Access to SNAP

Combat food insecurity on campus – a major barrier to student success – by streamlining access to SNAP benefits for eligible community college students. This will prevent bureaucratic barriers from increasing participation among eligible students. Additionally, support the ability of SNAP recipients to get the workforce training they need by strengthening the SNAP E&T program to disregard income earned in earn-and-learn programs.

Support Dreamers

Enact the Dream Act

Enact the Dream Act, once and for all, to give Dreamers permanent legal status. The Dream Act provides a path to citizenship for undocumented young people. Dreamers were brought to the U.S. as minors and frequently know no other nation besides America. More importantly, they make substantial contributions to the U.S. economy and society. Dreamers should also be able to access Title IV student aid funding. The Dream Act has traditionally garnered bipartisan support and work toward this goal must continue. Given current policy developments, it is more important than ever to provide stability to the many individuals who would qualify for the Dream Act.