June 6, 2011

The Honorable Denny Rehberg               The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairman                                   Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee           Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations                Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives             U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515                      Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of America’s community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) request your support for several key programs that are invaluable to creating higher education opportunity and preparing the nation’s workforce. Representing nearly 1,200 community college presidents and their trustees, AACC and ACCT have shared funding priorities.

The recent economic downturn has caused community college enrollments to soar, with workers seeking retraining and students looking to enhance their skills and career readiness. However, these enrollments have come at a time of deep budget cuts in virtually every state. While determined to meet the needs of these students, community colleges are struggling. Federal funding for both student aid and institutional support remains essential.

As you consider appropriations for FY 2012, we urge you to give funding priority to the following:

- **The Federal Pell Grant Program**
  Pell Grants are essential to providing access to higher education for low-income students. The program now serves more than 9 million students annually, the vast majority of whom come from families with very modest incomes. Community colleges strongly support the Pell Grant program, which each year enables approximately 3 million of their financially disadvantaged students to pay for tuition, books, transportation, and living expenses. AACC and ACCT urge you to maintain the Pell Grant maximum at $5,550 for FY 2012.

- **Increased Funding for the Strengthening Institutions Program**
  The Strengthening Institutions program (Title III-A of the Higher Education Act) provides critical support for colleges that have few resources and serve high proportions of low-income and historically underrepresented populations. Given the rising enrollments of low-income students, Congress should increase funding for the Strengthening Institutions program by $6 million, to $90 million, in FY 2012.

- **Provide $1.27 billion for the Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs**
  The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act programs are the largest source of federal institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. The Perkins Basic State Grants give postsecondary institutions the flexibility to identify local priorities and to fund innovation in occupational education programs. Community colleges use these grants for vital programs such as training first responders and public safety
officers; helping students meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improving curricula; purchasing equipment; integrating vocational and academic instruction; and fostering better links between colleges and the business community. We urge Congress to appropriate $1.27 billion for the Perkins CTE programs.

- **Other Important Funding Priorities**
  Community colleges strongly support the Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants, Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS), and the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. Similarly community colleges recognize the importance of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in serving as the primary vehicle through which the federal government, working with the states and local entities, provides essential job training services.

As efforts continue to address the nation’s economic problems, community colleges are working to educate and train students and workers of all ages and backgrounds to reach their full potential. These strategic investments in federal student aid and institutional support programs are vital to our nation’s long-term economic strength.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Walter G. Bumphus      J. Noah Brown
AACC President and CEO     ACCT President and CEO