Joint Legislative Agenda for the 112th Congress

Advancing America's Community Colleges in the Nation's Capital

American Association of Community Colleges
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
202-728-0200
www.aacc.nche.edu

Association of Community College Trustees
1233 20th St. NW, Suite 301
Washington, DC 20036
202-775-4667
www.acct.org
Community College Federal Legislative Priorities

Across the country, 1,200 community colleges serve as the vehicle for higher education, training, and workforce development to approximately 13 million students annually. With the ever-changing global economy, affordable access to higher education and training, and completion of credentials, are key to continued economic prosperity and extending its benefits throughout society.

Community colleges play a major role in returning the United States to world leadership in higher education attainment. Each year, community colleges educate approximately half of America’s undergraduate students, and they are the primary access point to higher education for historically underrepresented populations, first-generation college students, and those currently in the workforce who lack the higher education needed in the 21st-century economy.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) have joined with other community college leadership organizations in a Call to Action to produce 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020. In that document, these organizations “ask elected officials to create the policy conditions that enable, support and reward community colleges in their work to strengthen student success.” To do so, Congress must pursue an agenda that makes higher education, economic prosperity, and workforce development top priorities.

The American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees support the following legislative priorities for the 112th Congress.
Goal: Pursue legislation and funding that ease economic barriers for students to attend and succeed in community colleges and enable those institutions to better serve their communities.

Appropriations

- Provide increases to the federal Pell Grant program to ensure greater access to higher education for millions of academically qualified but financially disadvantaged students.

- Support major federal student aid programs, including Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and Federal Work-Study, which enhance community college student enrollment.

- Increase funding for vital institutional programs, including the Strengthening Institutions (Title III-A of the HEA) program, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, TRIO, GEAR UP, Predominantly Black Institutions, and others that enable community colleges to serve disadvantaged populations.

- Increase the federal investment in workforce development, including career and technical education (CTE) in the Carl Perkins Act and job training in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

- Maintain support for the Community College and Career Training Program in the Trade Act.

- Fund important Higher Education Act programs affecting veterans, rural colleges, and articulation agreements between institutions and states.

Institutional Support

- Support legislation that provides matching grants to states to assist community colleges in meeting the needs of expanding student populations and modernizing their facilities.

- Provide additional resources to enable community colleges to continue efforts to increase graduation rates.

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization Implementation

- Enact any needed technical amendments legislation to address unanticipated consequences and undue administrative burdens resulting from compliance with the reauthorized HEA and the conversion to direct student loans.

Veterans

- Support funding for existing programs as well as for the creation of new programs to help institutions better serve the particular needs of students who are veterans.

- Improve the benefits offered to student veterans through legislation modifying the post-9/11 GI Bill.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization

- Support the creation of a competitive state grant program to facilitate the creation and expansion of early college high school initiatives.

- Make community colleges active participants in Title II, Part A-Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund Grants.

Using the Tax Code to Finance Higher Education

- Enact legislation to make the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) permanent. Improve AOTC by targeting the credit to students with the greatest financial need and eliminating the penalty on Pell Grant and other aid recipients, which reduces the credit’s effectiveness for the neediest students.

- Continue to encourage employer-paid tuition benefits by making Section 127 of the tax code permanent.
DREAM Act

- Pass legislation that would grant undocumented students who are long-time U.S. residents legal residency status, and eliminate federal restrictions on states that choose to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students.
- Make DREAM Act students eligible for federal student financial assistance.

STEM Competitiveness

- Include community colleges in efforts to bolster America’s competitiveness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Increase funding for the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program at the National Science Foundation to $100 million by FY 2013. ATE serves a critical need by providing funds to establish and improve community college programs that produce skilled technicians.
- Enhance funding for the STEM Talent Expansion (STEP) program, which increases the quality of undergraduate math and science programs and the quantity of students who enroll in them.

International Education Programs

- Increase funding for the HEA Title VI and Fulbright Hays undergraduate international education programs, which are vital to national security and economic productivity.
- Support existing programs and legislation that increase opportunities for community college students to study abroad and that encourage international students to enroll at community colleges.

Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

- Refocus the workforce training and adult basic education programs under WIA on the attainment of postsecondary education credentials that are valued by employers. Increase the alignment between these programs by creating multiple pathways into postsecondary education and training, with community colleges providing significant leadership as true partners in the system.
- Provide for more innovative local and regional approaches to delivering workforce training, including contracts with training providers and sector-based initiatives, in addition to the current voucher-based framework.
- Ease the burden of data collection on institutions and increase community college involvement in the federal workforce development system by making public institutions of higher education automatically eligible as training providers.
- Establish the Career Pathways Innovation Fund (formerly, Community-Based Job Training Grants) in statute, and make community colleges the sole grantees for training and program development in high need areas.

Data Systems

- Ensure that community colleges are given fair access to state wage records and other employment-related data systems so that they can better track and manage institutional performance and comply with external accountability requirements.

Goal: Forge partnerships to advance the educational, economic and workforce development, and social goals of community colleges.
Welfare Reform

- Support modifications to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program that expand the vocational education time limit from 12 months to at least 24 months in order to enable TANF recipients to complete training programs and gain the necessary skills to secure employment.

Sustainability

- Support community college initiatives to train workers for the green economy and further the nation’s sustainability efforts by authorizing and funding the Community College Energy Training Act and by funding such existing programs as the University Sustainability Program.
- Support legislation that reduces colleges’ dependence on high-cost fuels through the development and implementation of energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies.

Allied Health and Nursing Legislation

- Support legislation to provide resources to nursing and allied health students and programs at two-year institutions, including an amendment to the Public Health Service Act, Title VIII (nursing education programs), to secure equitable funding for community colleges and make them eligible to receive grants for the purpose of expanding nursing enrollments.
- Support the current scope of practice and expand educational and career advancement for professionals credentialed through two-year institutions.

Homeland Security

- Support legislation and funding that recognize the critical role community colleges play in educating and training first responders.
- Identify federal agency programs that address the broad range of homeland security issues and enhance community college opportunities to partner with these agencies, as well as with other higher education institutions and the private sector, to provide education and training.

Rural Economic Development

- Support programs that recognize the critical role community colleges play in fostering rural economic development.
- Provide adequate federal resources for such essential programs as rural education, rural health care, renewable energy, and rural workforce development.

Service Learning and Community Engagement

- Support legislation to increase funding for Learn and Serve America and the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand service learning opportunities for students of all ages.
- Support the inclusion of priority points for community colleges in Learn and Serve America funding.

Older Students

- Improve opportunities for education and training for a maturing workforce by tailoring federal programs to meet their unique needs and preferences; help colleges provide comprehensive life-long learning opportunities for the older segment of the population.
American Association of Community Colleges

Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO
David Baime, Senior Vice President for Government Relations and Research
James Hermes, Director of Government Relations
Laurie Quarles, Legislative Associate

Association of Community College Trustees

J. Noah Brown, President and CEO
Jee Hang Lee, Director of Public Policy
Bryce W. McKibben, Public Policy Associate