Joint Legislative Agenda for the 114th Congress

ADVANCING AMERICA’S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

American Association of Community Colleges
Association of Community College Trustees
Each year more than 1,100 community colleges deliver quality higher education, training, and workforce development programs to more than 12 million students. As the largest sector of higher education, community colleges enroll approximately 45% of all undergraduate students.

**THE FACTS ABOUT Community Colleges**

- Community colleges are the primary access point to higher education for millions of historically underrepresented populations, first-generation college students, and those currently in the workforce seeking to upgrade their skills.

- More than one-third of all Pell Grant recipients attend a community college.

- Only 17% of community college students receive federal loans.

- The average tuition in fall 2014 for full-time, full-year community college students was $3,347.

- 58% of students are female; 16.4% are African American; 18.6% are Latino; and 5.5% are Asian American and Pacific Islander.

- Pell Grants represent the federal government’s commitment to ensuring that qualified lower and middle income students can afford college. More than 3 million community college students receive Pell Grants each year.
AACC and ACCT support the following legislative priorities for the 114th Congress.

**Pell Grants**
- Ensure continued eligibility and access to federal student aid for the neediest students, and ensure that the hardest to serve are not denied a chance to succeed in college.
- Maintain a strong commitment to Pell Grant funding that is sufficient to support scheduled increases to the maximum award without diminishing the temporary surplus in program funds.
- Fully restore eligibility for “Ability to Benefit” community college students.
- Reinstate the year-round Pell Grant program.
- Increase the total eligibility period from 12 to 14 semesters.

**Higher Education Act Funding**
- 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, Tribally Controlled Colleges, TRIO, GEAR UP, Predominantly Black Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, and others that enable community colleges to serve diverse and disadvantaged populations.
- Fund essential Higher Education Act programs impacting veterans and rural colleges.

**Higher Education Act Reauthorization**
- Establish more accurate and complete measures of student success counting transfers and measuring up to 300% of the normal program length.
- Replace the current Cohort Default Rate metric with a Student Default Risk Index that takes into account institutional borrowing rates.
- Implement reforms that support responsible student borrowing, including lowering aggregate loan caps for community college students, tying borrowing limits to enrollment intensity and giving institutions more authority to limit borrowing for programs that are at higher risk of default.

**Higher Education Act Reauthorization (continued)**
- Simplify the FAFSA process to support greater participation, including acceptance of prior-prior year earnings.
- Streamline federal reporting and disclosure requirements, while eliminating those that are unnecessary or overly burdensome.
- Establish stronger state maintenance of effort provisions.
- Support development of articulation agreements to promote effective transfers for community college students entering other institutions of higher education.
- Ensure that regulatory efforts aimed at high levels of student indebtedness, such as ‘gainful employment,’ adequately exempt low-cost institutions with few borrowers.
- Limit institutional burden by eliminating unnecessary and duplicative regulations.
- Encourage innovation, such as competency-based education and dual enrollment.
- Support a strong and independent accreditation process.

**Data, Accountability, and Ratings**
- Provide community colleges with 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.
- Create a federal student unit record system for Title IV eligible institutions that would track students throughout their postsecondary education studies and provide earnings information for program completers.
- Improve and align the reporting and outcomes standards for measurements of community college performance, including those found in the Higher Education Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, using the Voluntary Framework of Accountability as a model.

**Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE) Reauthorization**
- Increase the quality of funded programs by establishing more rigorous requirements that CTE programs be aligned with industry needs, highly coordinated between the secondary and postsecondary levels, and prepare students for occupations in high-wage, high-demand occupations.
- Establish consistent definitions and accountability metrics to enable a clearer picture of the performance of CTE at the national and state levels.
- Update the act to enhance support for student success by including dual enrollment, work experiences, integrated delivery of basic skills, and stackable postsecondary credentials.
Workforce Development

- Authorize and fund a program dedicated to supporting and expanding innovative community college and industry partnerships, such as the proposed Community College to Career Fund.
- Increase funding for the occupational and adult basic education programs authorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Tax Benefits for Higher Education

- Streamline and simplify higher education tax benefits provided to students and their families, while preserving the total investment made to promote college attendance through the Internal Revenue Code.
- Improve the AOTC by targeting assistance on students with the greatest financial need, increasing refundability, and ensuring that Pell Grant recipients and other financially needy students qualify for the credit.

Veterans

- Support funding for existing programs as well as the creation of new programs to help institutions better serve the particular needs of students who are veterans.
- Protect veterans from unscrupulous educational providers by providing them with the information they need to make sound choices, without imposing burdensome requirements on institutions.
- Support the ability of active duty personnel to access community college education.

DREAM Act

- Pass legislation that would grant legal residency status to undocumented students who are long-time U.S. residents 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.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization

- Support college and career readiness to reduce the need for remedial education and improve student time-to-degree.
- Implement a competitive state grant program to facilitate the creation and expansion of dual enrollment and early college high school initiatives.
- Support the community college role in teacher preparation.

STEM Competitiveness

- Increase funding for the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program at the National Science Foundation.

STEM Competitiveness (continued)

- Include community colleges in efforts to bolster America’s competitiveness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

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 encourage international students to enroll at 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 necessary job skills.

Sustainability

- Support community college initiatives to train workers for new energy technologies.
- Support initiatives to retrofit old community college facilities and develop new ones that are more energy efficient.

Allied Health & Nursing Legislation

- Support legislation to provide resources to health professions students and programs at two-year institutions, including amending Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act to make associate degree in nursing programs eligible for funding to educate new RNs and to make funding equitable among the educators of new RNs.
- Support the current scope of practice and expand educational and career advancement for professionals credentialed through two-year institutions, with a particular emphasis on attaining the Masters of Science in Nursing (MSN).

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.
- Ensure community colleges and the areas they serve have adequate access to broadband internet service.
American Association of Community Colleges

Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO
David Baime, Senior Vice President, Government Relations and Policy Analysis
James Hermes, Associate Vice President, Government Relations
Laurie Quarles, Legislative Resource Associate
Jolanta (J.J.) Juszkiewicz, Director, Policy Analysis
Roxanne Fulcher, Director, Health Professions Policy

A: One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 410 | Washington, DC 20036
P: 202-728-0200 | www.aacc.nche.edu

Association of Community College Trustees

J. Noah Brown, President and CEO
Jee Hang Lee, Vice President for Public Policy and External Relations
Jennifer Stiddard, Senior Public Policy Associate

A: 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 300 | Washington, DC 20036
P: 202-775-4667 | www.acct.org