Enhance Federal Funding for Community Colleges and Students

The federal budget and appropriations process determines how much funding Congress provides for student financial aid programs, including the Pell Grant program, as well as for programs that enable community colleges to better serve disadvantaged and minority students, provide job training, and expand other important programs. With nearly 13 million students of all ages enrolling annually in community colleges, federal investments in student aid and institutional support are making a significant difference.

Congress has yet to finalize the FY 2015 appropriations bills. Current expectations are that prior to the end of the current federal fiscal year (September 30), Congress will approve a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through the November elections.

Top funding priorities for community colleges include:

The Federal Pell Grant program enables approximately 9 million postsecondary students—more than 3 million of which are community college students—to enroll annually. Pell Grants help cover college expenses including tuition and fees, books, course materials, transportation, and other living expenses.

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act programs help community colleges 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 innovative programs. Community colleges use these grants to help students meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improve curricula; purchase modern equipment used in industry settings; integrate vocational and academic instruction; and foster better links between colleges and the business community.

Community colleges enroll millions of older students in Adult Basic Education programs annually and additional funding is needed to address the long waiting lists of individuals seeking to participate in these programs.

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, AACC urges Congress to increase funding for the Strengthening Institutions program.

Other funding priorities:

Federal Student Aid Programs
In addition to the Pell Grant program, community college students rely on other federal student financial aid programs, such as the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work-Study, and Direct Loans. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for
Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and the TRIO programs also help low-income, first-generation college students prepare for, enroll in, and succeed in college.

**Institutional Aid Programs**

Community colleges strongly support investments in direct institutional aid to those colleges that serve a disproportionate number of minority, low-income, and first-generation college students. Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act provide grant funds under the Strengthening Institutions, Strengthening Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other minority-serving institutions programs.

Other programs that benefit community colleges and their students include the international education programs (Title VI of the Higher Education Act) and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS). CCAMPIS supports the participation of low-income parents in college through the provision of campus-based child care services.

The National Science Foundation also provides funding for community colleges with the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. This program serves as the primary source of federal support for technician education, a crucial aspect of the STEM workforce. The ATE program enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills sought by industry in demanding fields such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and alternative energy.

**Workforce Development**

Narrowing the current skills gap is an essential part of our nation’s ability to compete globally. The Workforce Investment Act’s (WIA) job training and adult basic education programs provide workers, particularly those with minimal skills, with the education and training they need.

**AACC Funding Request:**

- Congress should preserve the appropriated base of $4,860 for the Pell Grant, which combined with mandatory funding, will provide an increase in the maximum award next year.
- AACC supports at least reinstating funding for the Perkins CTE program at pre-sequester levels. This would require an increase of at least $3 million over the current (FY 2014) level.
- Congress should reinvest in the Adult Basic Education program, starting with restoring sequester cuts in FY 2015.
• Funding for the Strengthening Institutions program is a top priority along with funding for the other Title III and Title V–Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions programs.

• Additionally, Congress should at a minimum preserve funding for the Federal Work-Study, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, TRIO and GEAR UP, the National Science Foundation’s ATE program, and the WIA job training programs.