Following the State of the Union, the Obama administration released a fact sheet about its proposals to help more students graduate from college. Pell Grants and the America’s College Promise figure prominently in these proposals. AACC will be discussing the latest federal legislative and regulatory issues during a pre-NLS webinar on February 3. We look forward to seeing many of you in DC at the Community College National Legislative Summit (NLS).

**Register for AACC’s Pre-NLS Federal Policy Webinar**

Join the AACC government relations team on Wednesday, February 3, 3:00–4:00 p.m. (ET), for a free federal policy webinar. Whether or not you plan to attend the upcoming NLS, get a briefing on the latest news about federal funding, Higher Education Act and Perkins CTE reauthorizations, the America’s College Promise proposal, and more. Register today.

**Obama Proposes New Pell Grant Investments**

On January 19, the administration released a fact sheet with details about two new Pell Grant proposals. In addition to supporting year-round Pell, President Obama is calling for an “on-track Pell bonus” for those students who take 15 credits per semester. These new proposals are designed to complement existing higher education initiatives including the America’s College Promise and the American Technical Training Fund. More specifics will be provided in the president’s upcoming FY 2017 budget blueprint scheduled for release on February 9. The Pell proposals were featured in a recent CC Daily story.

**First Lady’s Reach Higher Event**

http://echo4.bluehornet.com/hostedemail/email.htm?h=eef329696e49b7dccc8e482a2f30ad2a4&CID=-1
This week, Michelle Obama held an event through her Reach Higher Initiative to honor the 2016 school counselor of the year. The initiative is designed to inspire students to get a postsecondary education by supporting high school counselors and supporting initiatives for students to learn more about college and career opportunities, as well as financial aid. Obama also announced that his federal budget plan will include an additional $15 million for the Talent Search program, designed to help disadvantaged students complete college applications and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Learn more about the Reach Higher Initiative and view Obama’s speech.

Forgone Federal Financial Aid

Nearly $3 billion in federal grant aid is untapped by high school graduates because they did not apply for or complete the FAFSA. That is the finding of an analysis of 2014 data conducted by NerdWallet. According to the analysis of nearly 1.5 million high school graduates who did not fill out the FAFSA, about 750,000 were identified as being eligible for, on average, $1,861 in Pell Grant assistance.

The state-by-state analysis revealed that the highest average Pell Grant “left on the table” by non-FAFSA filers were in Mississippi ($2,639) and the District of Columbia ($2,513). High school graduates in 12 states missed receiving, on average, $2,000 or more in Pell Grant funds. Some students did not apply for federal student aid believing that they were not eligible for assistance without determining their eligibility. Other students did not complete the FAFSA because they did not have all the required information or were discouraged by making errors.

Transfer Report

The Community College Research Center, Aspen Institute, and National Student Clearinghouse recently released Tracking Transfer. The study proposes measures that can be used to determine the effectiveness of 2- and 4-year colleges in enabling students who enter community colleges to attain baccalaureate degrees. The report finds that community college transfer students had greater success attaining baccalaureate degrees at public institutions than at private institutions; transfer students who enroll in more selective institutions were likelier to attain 4-year degrees; and that low-income transfer students had worse outcomes than higher income students. Perhaps the most significant finding was that “institutional practices—not just institutional characteristics—matter.”

Breakthroughs in Developmental Education

A new Complete College America report touts the corequisite remedial education model as a breakthrough approach. According to the report, traditional remediation places students who are found not ready for college work into non-credit bearing or pre-requisite developmental education math and/or English classes, sometimes in more than one sequence. All too often, students, including those who pass their remediation classes, do not enroll in college-level courses, let alone earn a college credential. Corequisite remediation works differently, and as the name implies, “students enroll directly into college-level courses and receive academic support alongside their regular classes.” Five states—Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia—have adopted state-wide the corequisite remediation approach, although they are using different implementation models. The increase in the percent of students who enrolled in the corequisite remediation math and English courses and subsequently completed the introductory course compared to the prerequisite model ranged from nearly doubling (from 37% to 68%) to more than quintupling (from 12% to 61%). These results were measured after only one term or one year compared to a 2-year period used for prerequisite traditional remediation approach. See a recent CC Daily story for more.

Another recent study on developmental education was released this month by MDRC. The report reviews MDRC’s research of four types of developmental education reforms. Random assignment evaluations were conducted of summer bridge programs between high school and college in eight Texas and four New York City colleges and revamped math curricula in a Texas community college. MDRC also evaluated the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP), the New Mathways Project implemented in Texas, and performance-based scholarships in seven states.

Can Repayment Rates Improve Student Success?

For the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), the answer to the question of whether using repayment rates can improve student success is a resounding yes, based on discussions with institutional practitioners and policy experts. These experts were convened “to examine repayment rates within the context of institutional improvement, accountability, and information for students and families...specifically...to investigate if and how repayment rates should be incorporated into our
postsecondary systems to help advance student success." The discussion resulted in 11 takeaways, divided into four areas, including three aimed at policymakers and institutions and the last at the U.S. Department of Education. One of three general principles for repayment rate usage is that repayment rates not be used as a measure of academic quality, but rather as a measure of student and taxpayer protection.

**Status of State Guns on Campus Laws**

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS) produced a report on the legal environment of guns on campus in the states. The turning point for efforts to prevent violence on campus was the 2007 Virginia Tech 32-person massacre. Currently, nine states allow guns on campus, seven by legislation—Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin—and two as a result of court rulings—Colorado and Oregon. By comparison, 21 states prohibit guns on campus, 19 by legislation and two by higher education system-level policy. The report offers several items that campus and policy leaders should take into consideration regarding state-level policy permitting carrying firearms within postsecondary settings.

**Interested in Reviewing Back Issues of the Washington Watch?**

Visit the [AACC website](https://www.aacc.nche.edu).

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