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## Washington Watch

### AACC's Federal Policy Update



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As Congress considers funding for FY 2018, Education Secretary DeVos testified before the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee earlier this week about the administration's education priorities.

#### **DeVos Testifies in Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing**

U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos [appeared](#) before the Senate Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee on June 6 to answer questions about the Trump Administration's FY 2018 education budget request. Both Democrats and Republicans criticized the administration's proposals to cut the Pell Grant surplus and freeze the Pell Grant maximum award. Several members of the subcommittee raised concerns about proposed cuts to the Perkins CTE, TRIO, and Federal Work-Study programs. For more, see [CC Daily](#).

#### **AACC Supports Legislation to Expand Pell Grants**

AACC President and CEO Walter Bumphus sent a [joint letter](#) with ACCT President and CEO J. Noah Brown endorsing the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act. The [legislation](#) would enhance the Pell Grant program in several ways, including increasing the maximum grant, extending eligibility to Dreamers and incarcerated individuals, and raising the lifetime limit from 12 semesters to 14 semesters. The bill, introduced by Democrats in the House and Senate, also makes Pell Grants a full entitlement program and extends eligibility to certain short-term programs. The legislation is intended to lay out Democratic

priorities for the Pell Grant program as Congress debates reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

### House Democrats Introduce Bills to Expand College Access

Earlier this week, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), ranking member on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, issued a press release calling attention to legislation introduced by Democrats to “improve access to college and make college more affordable.” The [Jumpstart on College Act](#) would authorize funding to support dual enrollment and early college high schools; create a grant program designed to foster greater partnerships between higher education institutions and high schools; and support efforts to make it feasible for students to earn college credits at no cost while in high school. Another bill touted would promote competency-based education. The [Advancing Competency-Based Education Act of 2017](#) would provide for demonstration programs for competency-based higher education.

### Federal Agency News & Resources

**ED Has Concerns with Gainful Employment Regulations**—In a May 31 letter responding to a March 6 letter sent to DeVos by Senate Democrats, Acting Undersecretary James Manning reiterated that the reason for delaying the implementation of certain aspects of the gainful employment (GE) regulations until July 1 was to allow the department more time to review the regulations. He elaborated that “the Department has some concern about the Gainful Employment regulations promulgated by the previous Administration ... [and] will consider the potential impact on institutions where gainful employment programs are offered and other affected parties.” Virtually all programs offered by for-profit institutions are subject to the GE regulations as are certificate programs in public and not-for-profit institutions.

**Program Review Guidelines Released**—ED released the 2017 edition of the [Program Review Guide for Institutions](#). The guide provides important information to help colleges prepare for program reviews.

**Registration for Financial Aid Training Workshops Announced**—ED issued [the schedule](#) for its Fundamentals of Federal Student Aid Administration training workshops, July 2017 through June 2018. The in-person workshops will be offered at the department’s regional training facilities. Interested individuals are expected to complete an online course prior to attending the workshops.

### Policy Related Reports

**Management-Based Quality Assurance Model**—Peer-based accreditation takes on a different look under the [proposed management-based quality assurance model](#). The management-based model is based on certain high-level design principles, which vary in how closely they resemble or veer from the current accreditation system. One of the principles is that the “initial approval and a probationary period should focus on provider track record, program coherence and value proposition, student outcome goals and a plan for achieving them, and exit strategy in the event of failure.” Other principles include using standard peer-benchmarked measures of organizational efficacy and student outcomes; annual review of certain student outcome and financial stability measures; evidence-based program assessment every 3 years; and, “an escalating series of supports and consequences based on institutional performance.”

**State Role in Tuition Increases Scrutinized**—A [recent report](#) calls into question the significance of the state role in rising tuitions. “The disinvestment hypothesis: don’t blame state budget cuts for rising tuition at public universities” could just as well be called “dueling hypotheses” In seeking an explanation of why tuition has risen above the rate of inflation, the author of this report juxtaposed two hypotheses: the Bennett hypothesis and State Disinvestment. The author questioned whether the same standards of evidence had been applied to both hypotheses. Based on his research, he concluded that “it is time to start calling the claim that state funding cuts are the primary driver of rising tuition what it really is: the state disinvestment hypothesis.”

**Kentucky and Indiana Offer Tuition Free Certificate Programs**—According to a [Pew Charitable Trusts Stateline report](#), scholarships in Kentucky and Indiana are available that make some certificate programs tuition free. This is worthy of attention as certificate programs are the fastest growing

credential earned in U.S. postsecondary institutions. In the 32 Ivy Tech Community College campuses in Indiana, "certificates now make up over half of the awards." Proponents tout these programs, most of which take less than 2 years, many less than 1 year, as providing an opportunity to earn a credential for quick entry into the workforce. Critics "warn that they could have a limited impact." Recent national studies found that there is an earnings premium for short-term certificates, but this varies by the area in which the certificates are earned.

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