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## Washington Watch

### AACC's Federal Policy Update



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June 23, 2017

It's been a very busy month in Washington, DC. AACC hosted its Advocates in Action convening last week. The Trump administration issued an executive order on apprenticeships. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced that the DACA program will remain in effect. The Department of Education issued guidance on the year-round Pell Grant and published notices seeking input for regulatory changes. The House approved a bill reauthorizing the Perkins CTE Act. And, Congress continues to grapple with the FY 2018 budget and appropriations process.

#### Advocates in Action

As President Trump was preparing to unveil his training-to-jobs plan, community college presidents, government relations directors, and other senior administrators gathered in the nation's capital last week to focus on legislative and funding issues that are of paramount concern to the colleges. Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), who spoke at AACC's Advocates in Action meeting, noted that current funding for career and technical education was not enough for these programs. For more about the meeting, see [CC Daily](#).

#### Trump Signs Executive Order to Expand Apprenticeships

On June 15, President Trump signed an [executive order](#) expanding apprenticeships. Among other actions, the order directs the Department of Labor (DOL) to allow companies, trade associations, and unions to develop their own "industry-recognized apprenticeship" guidelines, which would then be subject to review by DOL. It also directs DOL to use available funding to promote apprenticeships and

requires all federal agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of their current job training programs. For more information, see [AACC's analysis](#) and coverage by [CC Daily](#).

### **DHS Affirms DACA Program Will Remain in Effect**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued [a memo](#) on June 15 stating that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program will remain in effect. The memo rescinds an Obama administration initiative for undocumented parents of citizens or legal residents and an extension of the DACA program. Neither was ever implemented because they were blocked by a federal court. The last line of the memo, however, affirms the continuation of the original DACA program, which started in 2012.

### **ED Guidance on Implementing Year-Round Pell**

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) on June 19 on implementing the newly reinstated year-round Pell Grant. AACC has supported the restoration of the year-round Pell Grant since its elimination in 2011. For more information, see AACC's [Advocacy News](#).

### **House Passes Perkins CTE Bill**

On June 22, the House approved the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, H.R. 2353. [The legislation](#), introduced last month by Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA), is similar to the Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) reauthorization bill overwhelmingly passed by the House last year. The Senate has yet to act on the legislation.

### **Department of Education News**

**Implementation of Borrower Defense Regulations Postponed**—ED [announced](#) on June 16 that it has postponed the original July 1, 2017, effective date of the borrower defense to repayment regulations. In the interim, ED intends to develop new regulations through the negotiated rulemaking (Neg Reg) process.

**July Public Hearings on ED Regulations**—ED [announced](#) two public hearings will be convened to discuss the rulemaking agenda for two Neg Reg committees that will be charged with developing proposed regulations to revise the gainful employment regulations and the borrower defense to repayment rules. The hearings will take place in Washington, DC, on July 10 and in Dallas, Texas, on July 12. Details are posted on the [ED website](#). David Baime, AACC's senior vice president for government relations and policy analysis, will be speaking about the gainful employment regulations at the Washington, DC, public hearing. For more information, see [CC Daily](#).

**ED Seeks Comments on Regulations to Repeal or Revise**—In addition to the borrower defense and gainful employment regulations, ED is actively seeking input on other regulatory issues. A notice was published on June 22 in the [Federal Register](#) requesting public comments on "regulations that may be appropriate for repeal, replacement, or modification." The department wants this input to inform its Regulatory Reform Task Force's evaluation of current regulations. A good [report](#) that summarizes many of the higher education regulatory issues was released by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in 2015. AACC will be submitting formal comments prior to the August 21 deadline and will make our analysis available for others to use as guidance.

**New Chief Operating Officer Named**—ED Secretary Betsy DeVos [announced](#) her intention to appoint Dr. A. Wayne Johnson as the chief operating officer of Federal Student Aid. Dr. Johnson has both financial aid and higher education experience. The Federal Student Aid portfolio of more than \$1.4 trillion in outstanding federal student loan balances currently serves 42 million student loan borrowers.

### **Other Resources**

**Voices of TAACCCT College Presidents**—Tune in to the podcast series “[Voices of TAACCCT College Presidents](#)” that features community college presidents discussing the impact of DOL’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program on their colleges. This series explores the leadership mindset and strategic approach that several community college presidents have taken to scale and sustain the impact of TAACCCT at their institutions. More than 700 institutions participated in the grants and more than 8,000 educational materials were created and are now available as open educational resources on [www.SkillsCommons.org](http://www.SkillsCommons.org), including the initial three podcasts. Four more podcasts will be added shortly.

### Policy Related Reports

**Persistence Rate Persists**—According to the National Student Clearinghouse’s [First-Year Persistence and Retention Snapshot Report](#), the 62.7% first-year persistence rate for the entering 2015 fall cohort at public 2-year institutions was unchanged from the previous year. The persistence rate is defined as the percentage of a cohort of students who return to college for their second year at any institution. The retention rate refers to returning to the same institution. Full-time students have a higher persistence rate of 70.2% percent compared to 56.9% for those entered the public 2-year institution on a part-time basis. On an encouraging note, Hispanic students had a comparable persistence rate from fall 2015 to 2016 to their white counterparts (64.9% and 67.8%, respectively) and almost a 5% higher retention rate (55.1% vs. 50.2%). Although the persistence rate for African American students was more than half (55.1%), it lagged behind other students.

**What Works to Help Low-Income Students**—MDRC issued two reports earlier this month. The [first brief](#) addresses what research shows to be effective innovations in financial aid to support college success, with year-round financial aid topping the list. The City University of New York’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) is the example cited. Performance-based scholarships were also found to improve student academic progress. The authors urge ED to collect data on year-round Pell grants to evaluate its impact. In addition, states as well as the federal government are encouraged to research whether other financial aid innovations, such as emergency aid, College Promise, and early college programs actually increase completion. The [second brief](#) tackles what is known about developmental education at community colleges and other open admission institutions. Several reforms were studied including building skills and aligning content with programs, boosting skills before students enter college, accelerated developmental education courses, and extra support. MDRC, in partnership with the Community College Research Center, has started a national center to study developmental education.

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