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July 21, 2017

The annual federal budget and appropriations cycle was off to a late start this year, but this week both the House Budget and Appropriations Committees held markups. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee advanced legislation to extend veterans education benefits and a new bipartisan DREAM Act was introduced in the Senate.

House FY 2018 Budget Resolution

On July 19, the House Budget Committee marked up its [FY 2018 budget resolution](#), Building A Better America: A Plan for Fiscal Responsibility. The committee approved the plan on a party-line vote after rejecting various Democratic amendments, including ones designed to restore funding for several education programs. Rejected amendments included one offered by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) that would have added \$2.8 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant for next year by \$500 and would have allowed for future annual increases in the maximum award.

The plan's allocations match the funding levels that the House subcommittee members have been using for their FY 2018 spending measures. The budget plan includes reconciliation instructions directing the Education and the Workforce Committee to find at least \$20 billion in savings over ten years in mandatory programs. The committee has complete discretion in identifying these savings. AACC continues to advocate for investments in community college education and workforce development programs as the budget and appropriations process unfolds.

House Appropriations Committee Approves FY 2018 Education Funding Measure

On July 19, the House Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2018 Labor-HHS-Education bill. The overall funding level for the bill is \$5 billion below the FY 2017 level, resulting in numerous program cuts and eliminations. Several Democratic amendments were rejected, including ones that would have restored funding for the Fulbright-Hayes international education and the CCAMPIS programs. In addition to rescinding \$3.3 billion from the Pell Grant program surplus, the legislation cuts funding for state grants under WIOA. The bill level-funds some key federal student aid programs, including the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Federal Work-Study programs. AACC and ACCT sent a [joint letter](#) to the Appropriations Committee prior to the markup.

House Bill Expands Veterans Education Benefits

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 this week. This [bipartisan bill](#), H.R. 3218, would expand eligibility and eliminate the current time limit on veterans to use their benefits. It also would provide relief for those veterans who attended closed schools. AACC joined ACE and several other education associations on a [letter of support](#) for the legislation.

Bipartisan DREAM Act Introduced

On July 20, Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) introduced the [Dream Act of 2017](#). The bill would provide a path to legal status and eventually to citizenship for people that came to this country when they were children and met certain criteria. AACC remains strongly supportive of this important legislation.

This latest incarnation of the Dream Act would confer conditional permanent residency status on individuals who were 17 or younger when they entered the country and have lived here continuously at least 4 years before the bill is enacted. In order to achieve non-conditional permanent residency, the Dreamer, in addition to meeting other requirements, would have to complete a college degree or 2 years towards a bachelor's degree, 2 years in the military, or a minimum amount of employment over a 3-year span. The employment option is a new feature of the bill. For more information, visit the [AACC website](#).

U. S. Department of Education (ED) Reports

Some Progress, Many Racial Disparities Remain — In ED's Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017 [report](#), 28 indicators covering kindergarten to post-collegiate outcomes are examined for racial and ethnic groups. Key higher education findings include highest college enrollment rates for Asian-Americans, lowest for American Indian/Alaska Native students; highest borrowing rates for African-Americans, lowest for Asians; doubling of bachelor degrees awarded to Hispanic students; Asian bachelor degree graduates had highest earnings.

Fewer Colleges, Undergraduates, More Awards — Preliminary 2016-17 data show, compared to last year, a decline in the number postsecondary, Title IV eligible institutions and an across the board increase in the average costs of full-time time attendance. In the same [ED report](#), undergraduate enrollment in 2015-16 was down, primarily driven by enrollment losses at for-profit institutions. By contrast, the number of graduates grew slightly (by less than 1%). Four-year for-profit institutions saw the largest one year drop of 17%, followed by 2-year for-profits (9.2%). Two-year and 4-year public institutions were polar opposites, with the former experiencing a 6.2% decrease, while the latter an equal increase. A higher number of awards were conferred in 2014-15 than last year, although the number of awards—associate degrees and certificates—conferred by 2-year public institutions declined by about 1%.

Policy and Research Briefs

Year-Round Pell Does Make a Positive Difference — Year-round Pell Grant funding has been

shown to have a positive impact on academic progress and employment according to a recent Community College Research Center [study](#). Using administrative data on community colleges in one state, the study compared the difference in the outcomes of full-time and part-time Pell-eligible students enrolling pre- and post-academic years of 2009-10 and 2010-11, when year-round Pell (YRP) was implemented. The study found that the extra summer Pell disbursement increased summer enrollment and credit accumulation, which in turn increased completion of certificate and associate degree programs. In addition, YRP eligible students were more likely to work in the fall semester of their first year than their non-YRP eligible students.

An Ode to Community Colleges — High praise indeed as the title of the Philanthropy Round Table's report indicates Revving Economic Engines at Community Colleges: Want to get America back to work? Stop overlooking the thousand schools that serve half of America's higher-ed students. This [report](#) serves as a clarion call to philanthropic organizations to support the contributions that community colleges make to the economy and society.

Guidelines for Connecting College and Careers — Recognizing that postsecondary education is the gateway to the middle class, the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce prepared a [report](#) that provides five ways to connect college and careers. The report is aimed at state policymakers to consider implementing some or all five of the web-based tools offered to support their decision making. For each of the five, which include program alignment with labor market demand, curriculum alignment with workforce requirements, as well as counseling and career pathways, states are featured that have developed or used such tools. Some involve community colleges, such as California and Virginia.

Not All Data Are Equally Valuable — College completion, post-collegiate earnings, and student loan repayment are often used as higher education outcomes. However, what specific data are used to measure these is worthy of discussion. The Third Way's [report](#) on The State of American Higher Education Outcomes relies on College Scorecard data. When the College Scorecard was first released, AACC provided a community college [perspective](#) on it, noting some of the limitations. For example, it uses ED's graduation rate metric, which only captures those first-time, full-time students who enrolled in the fall semester and completed their programs within the 150% time-frame. A relatively small segment of the community college population fits this description. The earnings information misses the majority of community college students who attend part-time. The student loan repayment rate is only a useful measure for the fewer than 20% of community college students who borrowed and are on a standard repayment rate. So, while there certainly is room for improvement, the data analyzed in this report fail to provide a complete picture of student outcomes.

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