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Washington Watch

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The 114th Congress is wrapping up its work on a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through April 28. With the current FY 2017 CR set to expire this evening, there is pressure to reach an agreement on this longer funding deal. The new stopgap measure, like the current CR, is expected to fund most federal programs at current levels.

Upcoming AACC Post-Election Federal Policy Webinar

Join the AACC government relations team for the latest in our series of free webinars to provide a briefing on the most pressing federal policy issues for community colleges. [Register today](#) for the webinar, which is scheduled for December 13 at 3:00 p.m. (ET). Learn how the election results will affect the policy landscape and the latest news on the transition. We'll also discuss the latest developments on issues such as year-round Pell Grants and federal funding, Higher Education Act and Perkins CTE Act reauthorizations, and more.

Federal Agency Guidance & Grants

Early January Deadline for Applications for Waiver of Institutional Match—Colleges and universities have until January 9, 2017, to submit applications for waiver of institutional match for campus-based programs under parts A and F of Title II and Title V of the Higher Education Act. The waiver eligibility requirements are spelled out in [the notice](#) posted by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and available in the [Federal Register notification](#).

Gainful Employment Webinars Now Available—ED posted [two webinars](#) on the gainful employment (GE) regulations this week. Session #25 presents updated information on which programs are considered GE programs, reporting and disclosure requirements, and the metrics. The second webinar, Session #26, goes into detail about GE disclosures, particularly the four new items. Please note that the GE Disclosure Template, which goes into effect January 2017, is not yet available. It is expected to be released by the end of the year.

Policy Related Reports

What Works in Developmental Education—An institutional-focused [Practice Guide](#) is the product of an expert panel's discussion of 21 evidence-based practices aimed at helping underserved students succeed in college. The guide contains six recommendations focused on instructional, as well as structural, interventions intended for campus administrators and faculty. These complement the efforts to implement one of the American Association of Community Colleges' 21st Century Commission [recommendations](#) to "dramatically improve college readiness."

Uptick in Completion Rates Across the Board—Completion rates increased for public 2-year institutions, as well as other types of institutions, for students who first enrolled in fall 2010, according to the latest [report of the National Student Clearinghouse](#) (NSC). Unlike ED's graduation rate, which tracks students only in one institution for a period of 150% of normal time to completion, NSC uses a 6-year time frame, includes students who completed in another institution, and captures completion rates for students at different attendance intensities (exclusively full-time, exclusively part-time, mixed, and overall). The overall completion rate for students who started at a 2-year public institution was 1.1% higher than the previous year (39.3% vs. 38.2%), with completion rates of women and younger students (age 20 and younger) outpacing those of men and older students.

Financial Challenges Not Limited to Paying for College—Community college students face a myriad of challenges, according to a report of the [Community College Equity Assessment Lab](#) (CCEAL). Many students experience food or housing insecurities and nearly one fourth experience both. These have implications for student success. Students facing one or more of these insecurities are more likely to feel that they do not belong in college and less likely to be confident about their abilities or the value of a college education. The report offers several practical recommendations and provides examples from three community colleges. See [Community College Daily](#) for more information.

Goodbye to Summer Vacation?—The Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment (CAPSEE) released a timely working paper last month titled [Goodbye to Summer Vacation?: The Effects of Summer Enrollment on College and Employment Outcomes](#). The author states that "more students are becoming aware of the potential benefit of summer coursework." The findings are based on a study of students at 4-year public higher education institutions, with evidence that summer enrollment boosts student retention, which leads to higher rates of completion and employment. This bolsters the arguments for year-round Pell Grants.

Post-Recession Status of Community Colleges: Great Strides, Persistent and Emerging Challenges—On December 6, the Urban Institute convened a panel to address the emerging issues facing community colleges since the [Great Recession](#). Two of the panelists, Sandy Baum and David Baime, who co-authored an [Urban Institute brief](#) on the diversity of community colleges in mission, student demographics, finances, program offerings, etc., provided the context for the ensuing discussion. There is neither a one-size-fits-all solution for the challenges facing community colleges nor uniformity in their quality and achievement. Focusing on the community colleges' role in workforce education and training, panelist Lauren Eyster spoke of recent innovations at community colleges, such as career pathways, competency-based learning, and use of career navigation, as well as the positive results of federal investments such as the [TAACCCT grants](#). Dan Phelan, president of Jackson College and chair of the AACC Board of Directors, elaborated on many of these topics from the perspective of his college. With an emphasis on student success, among many of the changes implemented at Jackson College was the hiring of more advisors, called success navigators, to shepherd students through their college

experience. For more information on the event, see [Community College Daily](#).

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