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Washington Watch

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Congress finally wrapped up the FY 2017 appropriations process last week. In a major victory for community colleges and their students, Congress reinstated the year-round Pell Grants beginning with the 2017-18 award year as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (H.R. 244). Restoration of the year-round Pell Grant has been a top AACC priority since its elimination in FY 2011. The FY 2017 omnibus bill funds federal agencies and programs through September 30, with most programs of importance to higher education level-funded. For more information, click [here](#).

Attention now shifts to the FY 2018 budget and appropriations bills. The Trump administration released its "[skinny budget](#)" for FY 2018 on March 16, and is expected to produce a more detailed budget request for the next fiscal year later this month.

Perkins CTE Legislation

Introduced last week by members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, the [Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (H.R. 2353) is scheduled for full committee markup on May 17. This bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act largely mirrors legislation approved by the House last September. For more, see [CC Daily](#).

Register Now and Join AACC on Capitol Hill

It's not too late to make your voice heard on Capitol Hill. AACC is hosting a new 2-day public policy and

advocacy event, Advocates in Action, in Washington, DC, June 12-13. The program is designed to strengthen your Hill relationships. Together we will advance the national community college agenda at a critical time for our colleges and students. Participate in interactive sessions with senior congressional staff and executive branch officials. Book your hotel room before the May 22 cut-off for our special rate. [Register now.](#)

Federal Agency News

In the Hot Seat over IRS Data Retrieval Tool Security Breach—Earlier this month, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing on criminal activity involving the [IRS FAFSA Data Retrieval Tool](#) (DRT), which [resulted](#) in the DRT being shut down until the new FAFSA cycle begins October 1, 2017. Questions posed by committee members to IRS and U.S. Department of Education (ED) witnesses could be characterized as “who knew what, when, and what was done about it.” And they were none too pleased with the responses. Calling the breach of security a “major incident,” the committee concluded that both departments had failed to meet a requirement of the Federal Information and Security Management Act (FISMA) to inform Congress of such an occurrence within 7 days, by taking 38 days to do so.

Policy Related Reports

Lowest Income Students Bear Greater Higher Education Cost Burden—Net price is considered a more accurate measure than the published or sticker price of the cost of attending college. Nonetheless, it is not an indicator of whether attending college is affordable. A [new report](#) by the Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) focuses on affordability of a public 2- or 4-year institution by income across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Not surprisingly, college cost burdens vary across states and college level, but what is consistent is that lower-income families have to spend a larger share of their income on a college education than their more affluent counterparts.

“It’s All About Pathways”—That was the title of a “Confessions of a Community College Dean” piece in [Inside Higher ED](#) following AACC’s Annual Convention in New Orleans. For the most up-to-date compilation of state legislative activities with respect to guided pathways, refer to the Education Commission of the States’ [Policy Snapshot](#). It turns out that at least from the state level perspective there has been some activity but not much legislation enacted as evidenced by information from 2016 and 2017. To date, three states have enacted guided pathways legislation—Missouri, North Carolina, and New Mexico. The report also includes previous legislative and policy activity, such as Florida’s 2013 bill requiring establishment of eight meta-majors and gateway courses, and Indiana’s Degree Map Guidance for public colleges and universities.

Equity Gaps in Higher Education Persist—The Pell Institute released a [revised version](#) of its 2015 Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States report showing 45-year trends. Unfortunately, the equity indicators—enrollment, financial aid and college costs, and educational attainment—show that “higher education outcomes are highly inequitable across family income groups. Moreover, on many of these indicators, gaps in outcomes are larger now than in the past.”

Successful Transfer Needs Effective 2-Year and 4-Year College Partnership—Most community college students want to attain a bachelor’s degree but few actually do so. A Community College Research Center (CCRC) [working paper](#) introduces an analytic framework to identify effective partnerships between 2-year and 4-year colleges in strengthening transfer paths. This entails first identifying effective community colleges whose transfer students earn bachelor’s degrees at higher than expected rates as well as effective 4-year receiving institutions. The second part of the analysis looks at factors that predict effective transfer partnerships. Ultimately, the intent of the framework is to provide a means for policymakers to “identify scalable and sustainable practices that could improve students’ transfer outcomes.”

Where Do Students Go When For-Profit Colleges Lose Federal Aid?—A [working paper](#) of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia tackles the question about the fate of students who attended

for-profit institutions that lost federal aid eligibility. Some surmised that these students would give up on postsecondary education. Others thought that at least some of these students would seek out nearby colleges, mostly community colleges, but without any indication of how many. This paper finds that “enrollment losses in the for-profit sector are offset by gains in enrollment in local community colleges, suggesting that the loss of federal student aid for poor-performing for-profit colleges does not reduce overall college-going but instead shifts students across higher education sectors.” In addition, the paper provides “suggestive evidence that students induced to enroll in community colleges following a for-profit competitor’s sanction are less likely to default on their federal loans.”

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