

Background on President Obama's Community College Initiative

On July 14, President Obama announced a dramatic proposal to provide additional support for America's community colleges. Below is some background information that will help your institution craft a local response for media and other purposes.

General Statement of Support

The American Association of Community Colleges supports President Obama's proposals to provide community colleges with direct financial assistance. Community colleges applaud the Administration for crafting policies focused on the unique needs and capabilities of the nation's network of community colleges. This support will help them better serve the country by offering easily accessible, high-quality education and training programs. Community college chief executive officers and state executives from across the country look forward to ensuring that the fundamentals of the President's proposals become enacted into legislation as soon as possible.

Community College Modernization and Construction

- Aggregate community college facilities needs are estimated at roughly \$100 billion, including the costs of upgrades, major renovation, and new construction. (This figure is based on an extrapolation from a national survey conducted in 2008.) Many community college campuses were constructed in the dramatic expansion of the nation's community college system in the 1960's and 70's, and are now in desperate need of renovation and upgrades to make use of new technologies and to make them more energy efficient.
- The surge of enrollments over the past year has put a new strain on community college facilities. Many campuses simply do not have the physical space to accommodate additional students.
- In times of budgetary stress such as that currently being experienced, facilities expenditures needs tend to be one of the first that are deferred, because of their size and long-term nature.
- Community colleges receive far less facilities financing from state and local governments than their peers in four-year institutions. If and when federal funding becomes available, we expect that it would be utilized quickly and efficiently because most states have orderly processes established for prioritizing and disseminating facilities funding to community colleges.
- Early this year, both the House of Representatives and the Senate Appropriations Committee approved substantial facilities funding – the Senate Appropriations Committee sought to ensure that community colleges receive a share of funding proportionate to their enrollments. However, this language and the overall facilities funding was deleted.

- [Any information about your institution's, or state's, needs in this regard would be obviously be extremely helpful]

Community College Challenge Fund

- Community colleges are desperately in need of increased support to cope with state and local funding reductions and the surge in enrollments. The Community College Challenge Fund proposed by President Obama will help support needed activities in a variety of areas.
- Securing funds for enhanced capacity at community colleges, particularly in occupational training areas, is a pressing need. Career and technical education programs can be significantly more costly to operate than other programs.
- Community colleges need additional support if they are to help significantly in achieving the President's goal of making America the world's leader in the percentage of its citizens who have a college education by 2020.
- [Any information about particular program needs or capacity limitations, such as programs that are full or even students who are being turned away, would be extremely helpful]

Online Skills Laboratory

- Community colleges have been at the forefront of distance education. More than 90 percent of all two-year public institutions offer on-line programs. More than two million community college students take on-line education courses each year.
- Distance education enrollments continue to grow on community college campuses – they increased by 11.3% in 2008, according to the Instructional Telecommunications Council.

General Points on Community Colleges

- There are approximately 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges across the United States—988 of them are public community colleges, according to AACC's analysis of Department of Education data.
- Community colleges are everywhere – and they enroll more than 46% of all the nation's college students. The most recent fall enrollment was 6.7 million students.
- Although final national figures are not available, AACC estimates that, due in part to the economic downturn, community college enrollments nationally have increased by close to 10% in calendar 2009 in comparison to 2008.

- Community colleges enroll more than 50% of all African-American students and more than two-thirds of all Latino students. 39% are the first in their families to attend college.
- Community colleges are the fastest growing segment of higher education. As a sector, they have added more than 2.5 million students over the last five years.
- Community colleges educate 50% of all the new Registered Nurses, 80% of all first-responders (police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, and EMTs), and play a critical role in the K-12 teacher training pipeline.

See Fast Facts on the AACC Web site for additional data.