Community College Associations Welcome Pell Grant Funding in Debt Ceiling Act, Wary of Potential Cuts to Other Key Programs

WASHINGTON—The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) appreciate the efforts of the Administration and Congress to include critical funding for the Pell Grant program in the Budget Control Act of 2011, but warn that the spending caps set in the legislation will likely lead to significant cuts in other important programs.

We are pleased that Congress has agreed to provide $17 billion in funding for the Pell Grant program between FY 2012 and FY 2013 to help address a projected shortfall, and that the maximum Pell Grant award will likely be maintained at or close to its current level of $5,550. Pell Grants are essential to providing access to higher education for low- and middle-income students. Each year, the program helps more than 3 million community college students gain access to and succeed in college by helping them pay for tuition, books, transportation, and living expenses that they would otherwise be unable to afford.

While AACC, ACCT, and the nearly 1,200 colleges and more than 12 million students we serve support the continued funding of the Pell Grant program, we also recognize that many other higher-education programs are in great peril. Funding for vital programs such as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education state grants, as well as occupational and adult education programs, is vital to helping disadvantaged students and unemployed workers get the training they need to participate in today’s high-skilled economy.

As the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction begins its work this fall, AACC and ACCT call upon members of the committee and Congress as a whole to take a balanced approach that prioritizes investments in higher education and workforce training, including Pell Grants.

The nation’s economy cannot afford to fall farther behind in human capital development; support for higher education is more important today than ever before.

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