

# [OP-ED GUIDELINES AND SAMPLE TEXT]

To help call attention to the benefits of your institution and the college's need for economic support, a draft for an opinion editorial is attached. The text provided can be used as is with your institution's specific examples added or can serve as the starting point for your own language and call to action. You can delete bulleted examples of return on investment in the draft text if the examples do not apply to your institution, or add other examples that are a better fit for your local community. Ideally the op-ed should be bylined by your president and/or the chair of your board of trustees.

Once your op-ed has been finalized, you can submit it to either your local newspaper or the paper in your state's capital. To do this you will need to:

- Identify how to submit the op-ed electronically and confirm the email address for the editor of the opinion page. This information can be found on a newspaper's website. You can also call the newspaper outlet and ask for the email addresses. Some newspapers provide a general e-mail address, such as [oped@\[newsoutlet\].com](mailto:oped@[newsoutlet].com) for op-ed submissions.
- Send the op-ed to the general op-ed email address and to the editor of the op-ed page's e-mail address.
- Concurrently, send a copy to the education/higher ed reporter as an FYI document and share that you submitted it to the editor for review.

Below are tips for increasing the chances of having the op-ed placed:

- Check the newspaper's online guidelines for the preferred word count for op-eds and adjust the length of the piece to fall within the paper's preferences. This is traditionally found as an informational link on the paper's main opinion page or on the page that provides contact information.
- Submit the op-ed by e-mail as a Word document or embedded in the text of the email; do not send a PDF.
- If possible, have the signer of the op-ed send the e-mail. Editors tend to pay greater attention if a president sends the e-mail requesting review and placement.
- Ask in your e-mail correspondence for confirmation of receipt of the message and op-ed.
- Follow up by telephone the next day to the op-ed page editor or submission contact to ask if you can answer any questions and see if he/she is interested in running the piece. If no decision has been made, ask for an anticipated timeline and call back in advance of the decision date.
- Follow up to any requests for edits or additional information as quickly as possible.
- If the preferred outlet is not interested, consider other community or regional papers. There may be online-only outlets to consider as well.
- It is not advisable to submit an op-ed to more than one outlet at a time, so allow your piece to make it through the necessary review process. Sometimes editors fail to respond. After waiting a week, move on to the next media outlet.

Once the op-ed runs, post a hyperlink to it on your institution's website. Share the link with staff and faculty through intranet postings, school newsletters or e-newsletters or other established communications vehicles. If you have a Facebook presence, post a link to the op-ed to your page. If you have a Twitter account, tweet about the coverage, and include a link to the op-ed and reference the hashtags: #highered and #aacc. The president can also send an electronic

or paper copy of the op-ed to key “influencers,” including members of the state legislature, business leaders and other community members. Links to the op-ed should also be sent to online only/electronic media with a request that they link to the op-ed and suggest they cover the successes of your college with stories of their own. You will increase the odds of further coverage if you offer to make available the op-ed signer for interview or provide further resources and information.

Should you have questions about next steps, please contact Norma Kent at [nkent@aacc.nche.edu](mailto:nkent@aacc.nche.edu) or 202/728-0200, ext. 209, who will be happy to provide additional guidance.

## The Proven Path to Economic Recovery

As governments at all levels contemplate cuts and re-set priorities to make ends meet, one reality needs to be front and center: Support for economic recovery is paramount.

Not all government expenditures are alike. Our policymakers should focus on enriching those areas that have proven they can help get us out of the current recession and back to economic prosperity and local job growth.

A study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found, "By 2018, we will need 22 million new workers with college degrees—but will fall short of that number by at least three million postsecondary degrees . . . At a time when every job is precious, this shortfall will mean lost economic opportunity for millions of American workers."

The only way our country can move beyond our current economic difficulties is to allow people to achieve their career potential, therefore expanding job growth and our national and regional economies. With these changes our GDP grows, our federal, state and local tax base expands, and recovery is possible.

What is the dependable path to economic recovery? America's 1,200 community colleges. Study after study show that every dollar invested in community colleges eventually returns more to the state in tax dollars and new opportunities.

Consider these examples of the extraordinary return on investment we've come to expect from community colleges including [Insert name of institution]:

- More than ever, people go to community colleges to qualify for jobs. [Insert local examples. For example: "Enrollment at the college over the past two years has increased X percent, representing Y students seeking job skills and an education to make them more competitive in the current job market."]
- In astonishing numbers, workers go to community colleges to re-tool for job improvement, and community colleges are on the forefront of on-the-job training programs with existing companies. [Insert local examples. Example text: "On our campus alone, SAMPLE PROGRAM has seen a Y percentage increase in enrollments. This program trains workers to FILL IN DETAILS OF WORK EXPERIENCE/SKILLS GAINED." Example text: "We are proud of our existing partnerships with LIST LOCAL COMPANIES WITH THE GREATEST NAME RECOGNITION, and we continue to teach the skills that our community's businesses need most."]
- Growth areas – like health care – rely on community colleges to supply qualified workers to meet the needs of aging populations. Nationally, 52 percent of new nurses and the majority of other new healthcare workers are educated at community colleges. Locally, [Insert name of institution] educates [Insert local examples.]
- First responders – now including Homeland Security – need the training and skills offered at community colleges. Community colleges credential close to 80 percent of all firefighters, law enforcement officers and EMTs. This is illustrated in our own backyard by [Insert name of institution] through [Insert local examples.]
- Economic recovery must include expanding alternative energy sources – and community colleges will supply the necessary people power. [Insert local examples. Example text: "INSTITUTION has X courses and Y programs focused on energy-specific fields. Last year alone, we enrolled A students in these courses and awarded B certificates."]

- More college students are now enrolled in community colleges than in any other sector of higher education and earn about 932,000 associate degrees or certificates annually. Community colleges thus are critical to the achievement of state and national goals for increased degree, skills and certificate attainment.

Community college support from policymakers – both local and federal – moves us beyond the recession and creates jobs locally. Now is the time for our elected officials to sustain the proven path to economic recovery and provide the opportunity that members of our community deserve.