

TO: Legislative Advocate
FROM: AACC/ACCT
DATE: January 15, 2010
SUBJECT: State legislator correspondence

To help you with outreach to your state legislators, we have provided suggested text and guidelines. The sample letter was written so you will be able to customize it with relevant information about your institution and what is transpiring in your state.

Ideally, letters to state legislators should be signed by the president of your community college or the chair of your board of trustees and should be written on your institution's letterhead. In addition to sending a letter to the state legislator from your jurisdiction, also target those who chair appropriations and education committees. If you have branch campuses, include state legislators who represent those geographic areas as well. Information and addresses should be available on your state legislature's Web site or you can call the legislature's main number and request the relevant information.

Also, you may wish to send a letter to the U.S. Representative who serves the Congressional district in which your institution is based (<http://www.house.gov/>) and the two U.S. Senators who represent your state (<http://www.senate.gov/>). Address blocks should begin with "The Honorable [NAME]" and salutation should be "Dear Representative [NAME]" or "Dear Senator [NAME]."

The text provided is a starting point. Feel free to make changes designed to present the most compelling case for your community college. Consider attaching to your letter the community college fact sheet provided by AACC and ACCT since the fact sheet compliments the letter's key points.

Should you have questions about next steps, please contact David Baime at dbaime@acc.nche.edu or 202/728-0200, ext. 224, who will be happy to provide additional guidance.

DATE

ADDRESS BLOCK

Dear Representative XXXX:

Jobs are key to economic recovery at local, state and national levels, and community colleges are key to getting and keeping Americans prepared for these economy-driving jobs. Uniquely American, our 1,200 community colleges serve virtually every community in the nation – including the ones you represent – and enroll almost half of all U.S. undergraduates.

Over the past two years, enrollments at community colleges nationwide have surged an incredible 16.9 percent. State funding, however, has declined as much as four percent [info can be customized, if available, for this Rep's state]. The result is that workers in need of new skills or young students preparing for their futures may not have a seat in the classroom. Never before have community colleges been unable to accommodate those who need, want and deserve an education. In order to preserve learning opportunities for all in your community, as well as those across the country who will help reinvigorate our economy, we need your help.

Since the onset of the economic downturn, community colleges have added late night and early morning classes while at the same time cutting costs and staff. [Here in XX, YY Community College has ...] We continue to collaborate with businesses and industry [include local example if there is one], but businesses are facing fiscal challenges along with shortages of workers with key skills. Individual livelihoods as well as our nation's economic competitiveness are at stake.

In 2009, the President's Council on Economic Advisors stated, "In many respects, community colleges are the epicenter of the U.S. post-high school education and training system... they can be nimble allies of employers and other workforce partners in providing customized training that is specific to the needs of a particular employer or industry." Community colleges need your support, however, to continue to be this "epicenter" of opportunity.

Community colleges contribute over \$35 billion annually to the nation's economic growth, which represents 7 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. If funding for our nation's community colleges were curtailed, 10 percent of the workforce would lose access to critical education and training opportunities, according to current economic research. This in turn would increase state and local taxes on businesses and employers by \$1,100 per year and nearly \$60 a year for individual taxpayers.

Community colleges offer a proven return on investment, especially in tough times. Support local education and economic opportunity. Restore needed funding levels to community colleges.

Sincerely,