2015 Community College Federal Legislative Priorities

The Pell Grant Program

Community College Position: Provide adequate funding to support inflationary increases to the Pell Grant maximum award without limiting eligibility. Restore the year-round Pell Grant, reinstate full eligibility for “ability-to-benefit” students, and extend lifetime Pell eligibility to 14 full-time equivalent semesters.

- More than 3 million low- and moderate-income community college students receive Pell Grants each year. The grants reach more than one-third of all community college credit students, and help them pay for tuition, course materials, and living expenses.

Federal Funding for Community Colleges and Students

Community College Position: Provide strong funding support for key community college programs at least equal to the prior year’s funding levels, and nullify sequestration cuts for FY 2016 and beyond.

- Federal higher education and workforce training programs are essential to millions of community college students. Robust appropriations are needed for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; Federal Work Study; Carl D. Perkins Basic State Grants; institutional aid through Strengthening Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and Predominately Black Institutions; and the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education program.

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization

Community College Position: Reauthorize the Higher Education Act to support community college access and success by improving student aid programs, ensuring accurate and complete measurements of student success, reducing regulatory burdens, and improving institutional support.

- Principal AACC and ACCT reauthorization priorities include:
  - Loans – Revise current borrowing limits to better reflect the needs of students in associate degree and certificate programs. Replace cohort default rates with a more accurate measurement that takes into account borrower frequency. Ensure that loan defaults do not unfairly limit student aid by delinking defaults and Pell Grant eligibility. Consolidate Direct Loan repayment options.
  - Transparency and Reporting – Develop accountability measurements that accurately reflect community college student success, including transfer rates. Create a national unit record data system to effectively track students.
  - Additional Priorities – Ensure maintenance of adequate state funding. Allow student to access Title IV for workforce-oriented short-term programs. Reduce regulatory burdens on campuses.
Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act

Community College Position: Reauthorize the Perkins Act to maintain program flexibility, allowing community colleges to address local needs while strengthening CTE programs.

- The reauthorization should enhance student pathways that promote college and career readiness, and strengthen ties between community colleges and local businesses. Reforms must also reflect current educational practices, including: dual enrollment; work experiences; integrated delivery of basic skills; and stackable postsecondary credentials. Align reporting requirements for Perkins, WIOA, and other programs.

Community Colleges and Veteran Students

Community College Position: Enhance the essential role community colleges play in serving veterans and active duty service members.

- Veterans and active duty service members should receive comprehensive counseling and services, as well as accurate and useful information about all educational options. The HEA’s Centers of Excellence for Veterans Success program must be adequately funded.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act

Community College Position: Pass the DREAM Act, including access to federal student aid for DREAMers.

- The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act provides a path to legal status for thousands of undocumented students who were brought to the U.S. as children, worked their way through high school, and then face an uncertain future regarding higher education. The DREAM Act returns to states the authority to decide whether or not to extend in-state tuition to undocumented students.

Higher Education Tax Provisions

Community College Position: Streamline current higher education tax benefits to support an expanded American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC).

- The current array of higher education tax benefits are overly complex and lead to widespread underutilization. Community colleges support:
  - Streamlining current benefits to support a more generous and permanent AOTC
  - Increasing refundability
  - Creating better alignment with the Pell Grant program to ensure the neediest students benefit from the AOTC.

Extend the TAACCCT Program

Community College Position: Authorize and fund a program to continue the mission of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act Community College and Career Training Grant (TAACCCT) program.

- Following four years of competitive grant awards, the $2 billion TAACCCT grant program expired in 2014. The program delivered high quality, relevant training to TAA-eligible and other workers, and encouraged new program delivery. Funding has helped generate cooperative agreements between a wide range of institutions and business. Congress should pass legislation to continue the goals of TAACCCT.