

NEWS



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Nation Shines the Spotlight on Community Colleges in April

Washington, DC – Have you hugged your community college lately? Thanks to community colleges, millions of Americans—of all ages and backgrounds—are getting a first-rate, affordable education that equips them with the skills to attain a good-paying job, transition to a four-year institution, advance in their current careers, and move into the middle class.

Recently, the spotlight has been placed on our nation's 1,123 colleges, as President Obama's bold proposal to eliminate tuition for students in certain community college programs was announced earlier this year. Like the state and local initiatives it builds upon, the president's proposal dramatically underscores the importance of obtaining a postsecondary education in today's economy. It is also an investment in the nation's economy. The proposal would help the full range of students at community colleges, including adult students, while seeking to ensure that states maintain or increase their investments in higher education.

April is Community College Awareness Month, which provides a great opportunity to reflect on the value these institutions bring to their communities and the nation. A report by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) found two-year colleges contributed \$809 billion in added income to the U.S. economy in 2012, which is equal to 5.4 percent of the gross domestic product.

"Community colleges offer pathways to economic success – and hope for the future – to lower-income students, first-generation college-goers, minority students, veterans, single parents, and anyone looking to advance their skills," says AACC President Walter Bumphus. "Community colleges continue to be gateway to a better life for many and provide access to higher education for all Americans regardless of their background or socio-economic status." Coupled with their economic benefit within the local and regional economies, "there is no doubt that community colleges provide the best investment in the country," Bumphus continued.

As community college graduates move into higher-paying jobs they will contribute \$285.7 billion in increased tax revenue and will save taxpayers \$19.2 billion in decreased social and safety net services while experiencing better health and lower crime rates.

More than 2,000 community college leaders and other education and industry professional from every state will be celebrating their accomplishments, as well as exploring new educational trends and ideas, at AACC's 95th Annual Convention, April 18–20, in San Antonio, Texas.

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As the voice of the nation's community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), delivers educational and economic opportunity for 13 million diverse students in search of the American Dream. Uniquely

dedicated to access and success for all students, AACC's member colleges provide an on-ramp to degree attainment, skilled careers and family-supporting wages. Located in Washington, D.C., AACC advocates for these not-for-profit, public-serving institutions to ensure they have the resources and support they need to deliver on the mission of increasing economic mobility for all.