



American Association of Community Colleges

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Joint Legislative Agenda for the 115th Congress

ADVANCING AMERICA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

American Association of Community Colleges
Association of Community College Trustees



Each year more than 1,100 community colleges deliver quality higher education, training, and workforce development programs to more than 12 million students. As the largest sector of higher education, community colleges enroll approximately 45% of all undergraduates.

THE FACTS ABOUT

Community Colleges

- Community colleges serve as the primary access point to higher education for millions of historically underrepresented populations, first-generation college students, and those currently in the workforce seeking to upgrade their skills.
- The average age of a community college student is 28 years old.
- 57% of students are female; 14% are African American; 22% are Latino; and 6% are Asian American or Pacific Islander.
- 67% of community college students work while enrolled; 32% work full-time.
- More than one third of all Pell Grant recipients attend a community college.
- The average annual tuition and fees for a full-time community college student was \$3,520 for the 2015-16 academic year.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Federal Legislative Priorities

AACC and ACCT support the following legislative priorities for the 115th Congress.

Pell Grants

- Preserve the Federal Pell Grant program as the foundation of federal student aid for millions of needy college students.
- Provide annual increases to the maximum Pell Grant.
- Reinstate the year-round Pell Grant.
- Increase lifetime Pell Grant eligibility to 14 semesters (full-time equivalent).
- Restore full eligibility for “Ability-to-Benefit” community college students.

Funding for Federal Student Financial Aid and Institutional Aid Programs

- Ensure federal budget policies allow for necessary investments in domestic discretionary appropriations.
- Support the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study programs, which enhance community college student enrollment and success.
- Increase funding for vital institutional aid programs, including the Strengthening Institutions (Title III-A of the HEA) program, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, TRIO, GEAR UP, CCAMPIS, and others that enable community colleges to serve diverse and disadvantaged populations.

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization

- Simplify the FAFSA process to support greater community college participation in federal student aid programs.
- Establish more accurate measures of community college success by counting students who graduate within six years and who transfer to other colleges.
- Establish meaningful state maintenance of effort provisions for higher education.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization (continued)

- Support responsible student borrowing by tying borrowing limits to enrollment intensity, giving institutions more authority to limit borrowing in defined circumstances, and authorizing institutions to require greater loan counseling.
- Replace the current Cohort Default Rate metric with a Student Default Risk Index that incorporates institutional borrowing rates.
- Encourage innovation in higher education, including competency-based education, dual enrollment, and other educational reforms.
- Support an independent accreditation process that provides necessary quality assurance.
- Streamline federal reporting and disclosure requirements and lighten the federal regulatory burden; ensure that the Department of Education works in a positive, partnership-oriented fashion with institutions.
- Create a federal student unit record system to generate student-level data on postsecondary outcomes and earnings.
- Create a federal College Promise program in partnership with states to eliminate tuition and fees for high quality programs at community colleges.
- Refine Title IX provisions to enhance student safety and clarify institutional responsibilities, taking into account the nature of community college campuses.

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE) Reauthorization

- Increase the quality of funded programs by establishing more rigorous requirements that CTE programs be aligned with industry needs, highly coordinated between the secondary and postsecondary levels, and prepare students for occupations in high-wage, high-demand occupations.
- Establish consistent definitions and accountability metrics to enable a clearer picture of the performance of CTE at the national and state levels.
- Update the act to better support student success by including dual enrollment, work experiences, integrated delivery of basic skills, and stackable postsecondary credentials.
- Increase funding for CTE state grants.

Workforce Development

- Authorize and fund a program dedicated to supporting and expanding innovative community college and industry partnerships.
- Increase funding for the occupational and adult basic education programs authorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Improve and align the reporting and outcomes standards for measurements of community college performance in workforce and related programs.

Tax Benefits for Higher Education

- Streamline and simplify higher education tax-based aid provided to students and their families, while maintaining the total federal investment made in students.
- Improve the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) by targeting the credit to students with the greatest financial need, increasing refundability, and ensuring that Pell Grant recipients qualify for the credit.

Allied Health & Nursing Legislation

- Support legislation to provide resources to nursing and allied health students and programs at two-year institutions, including an amendment to the Public Health Service Act, Title VIII (nursing education programs), to secure equitable funding for community colleges and make them eligible to receive grants for the purpose of expanding nursing enrollments.

Veterans

- Support funding for new and existing programs to help institutions better serve the needs of veteran students.
- Ensure the ability of active duty personnel and their dependents to access community college educational programs.
- Enact reforms that help veterans choose the educational program best suited to their needs and to prevent their exploitation.

DREAM Act

- Pass legislation that would establish a path to citizenship for undocumented students who are long-time U.S. residents and eliminate federal restrictions on states that choose to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students.

DREAM Act (continued)

- Make DREAM Act students eligible for federal student financial assistance.

STEM Competitiveness

- Increase funding for the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program at the National Science Foundation.
- Include community colleges in efforts to bolster America’s competitiveness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

International Education Programs

- Support existing programs and legislation that increase opportunities for community college students to study abroad and encourage international students to enroll at community colleges.
- Increase funding for the HEA Title VI and Fulbright Hays undergraduate international education programs, which are vital to national security and economic productivity.

Assisting Financially Needy Community College Students Through TANF and Other Programs

- Support modifications to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program that expand the vocational education time limit from 12 months to 36 months in order to enable TANF recipients to complete training programs and gain the necessary skills to secure employment.
- Establish federal policies that help students establish eligibility for programs that address food, housing, medical and other needs of severely financially disadvantaged students.

Rural Economic Development

- Support programs that recognize the critical role community colleges play in fostering rural economic development.
- Provide adequate federal resources for such essential programs as rural education, rural health care, renewable energy, and rural workforce development.
- Ensure community colleges and the areas they serve have adequate access to broadband Internet service.