



Community College Legislative Priorities, June 2018

1) Successfully Reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA)

The Higher Education Act (HEA) is the single most important piece of legislation impacting community colleges and their students. A House HEA reauthorization bill may shortly be moving to the floor. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee has yet to produce legislation.

U.S. House of Representatives

AACC does not support H.R. 4508, the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act, as approved by the House Education and the Workforce Committee in December. The association has joined the American Council on Education in stating that it will oppose the bill if it goes to the floor unchanged.

The legislation does contain important community college priorities. Some of them are:

- New Title IV eligibility for short-term workforce development programs.
- New authority for campuses to limit student borrowing in defined circumstances.
- A revised federal graduation rate calculation that reflects that of AACC's Voluntary Framework of Accountability and the community college student population.
- New student aid eligibility for competency-based education programs.

However, the legislation has shortcomings that prevent AACC from lending its support. These include:

- New "risk-sharing" provisions that will impose significant new financial liabilities on community colleges, making it harder for them to promote student success.
- Eliminating the Title III-A, Strengthening Institutions Program.
- Ending the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program.
- Eliminating the in-school interest subsidy on Direct Loans for qualified students.
- Maintaining the prohibition on creating a federal student unit-record data system.
- Establishing a new loan repayment rate standard for each Title IV program, with uncertain impact.
- Eliminating program integrity provisions primarily directed at for-profit institution abuses.

U.S. Senate:

The Senate HELP Committee has yet to produce HEA reauthorization legislation. Any reauthorization bill should include the following key elements:

Pell Grants: Implement annual increases in the maximum grant; create new eligibility for short-term workforce education programs focused on employer needs; establish eligibility for "second chance" prison education programs; extend the lifetime Pell Grant eligibility limit to 14 semesters; restore full Ability-to-Benefit Title IV eligibility.

Loans: Provide campuses with new authority to reduce loan maximums in specified circumstances; dramatically simplify repayment terms and procedures; ensure that accountability measures incentivize institutions that minimize student borrowing, as with the current “participation rate index” (PRI) for cohort default rates.

Data/Measurements: Create a new national student unit record data system to be linked to workforce earnings data (as in S. 1121 and H.R. 2434); place into statute a 6-year graduation rate for community college students.

Risk-Sharing: Reject risk-sharing of any type. Risk-sharing will undermine student success by depriving institutions of already limited resources, particularly where large numbers of at-risk students are served.

2) Provide Necessary Support for Community Colleges and Students in FY 2019 Appropriations

A February 2018 budget agreement provided appropriators \$18 billion more to spend on non-defense discretionary programs in FY 2019. Senate appropriators have added \$2 billion to the Labor, HHS and Education (LHHS) appropriations committee’s allocation, while the House allocation is the same as last year. Final appropriations legislation should reflect the higher Senate allocation. However, these allocations will not be sufficient to provide needed investments in education and workforce training if Congress passes rescissions that eliminate other sources of funds for the Labor-HHS-Education bill. Community colleges oppose any such rescissions package.

Programmatic priorities include:

- Increasing the maximum Pell Grant to keep pace with inflation.
- Enhancing funding for the HEA Title III-A Strengthening Institutions Programs and the Adult Basic Education and Family Literacy Act.
- Significantly increasing funding for the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program.
- Maintaining the increased investments made in other priority programs in FY 2018, including the other HEA Title III and Title V programs, TRIO, GEAR-UP, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs, and Department of Labor Apprenticeship Grants.

3) Protect DACA/DREAMers

Congress must act to provide legal status and a path to citizenship for undocumented students and others who were brought to this country as children. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has been an essential, temporary solution to protect these individuals. However, the Trump administration’s cessation of DACA, which is now only being kept in place because of court orders, has put the status of DACA beneficiaries in doubt. Community colleges have supported the Dream Act and similar legislation since its original introduction in 2001 and support current efforts to bring these bills to a vote on the House floor. Should that effort succeed, community colleges urge the House to pass the Dream Act or similarly robust legislation and for the Senate to follow suit.

For more information, contact David Baime, dbaime@aacc.nche.edu, or Jim Hermes, jhermes@aacc.nche.edu