

Less need for federal loans

Community college students with Pell grants are less likely to take on student debt than similar students in other sectors of higher education.

Percent of Pell Grant recipients with any federal student loans, by control and level of institutions in selected years



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Data Point: Trends in Ratio of Pell Grant to Total Price of Attendance and Federal Loan Receipt,” July 2019.



Pell grants are a federally funded, needs-based source of financial aid to help students pay for college. About one-third (34 percent) of community college students received a Pell Grant in the 2015-16 academic year. On average, Pell grants cover nearly one-third (31 percent) of all education expenses for community college students — a higher percentage than other sectors. Community college students who received the grants were also significantly less likely to take on federal-loan debt for educational expenses not covered by the Pell Grant. In fact, only one-quarter of community college Pell Grant recipients took on federal-loan debt in the 2015-16 academic year, compared to 64 percent of students in public four-year colleges, 80 percent in private nonprofit four-year institutions, and 76 percent in for-profit colleges.

For more information, contact Kent Phillippe, associate vice president for research and student success at the American Association of Community Colleges, at 202-416-4505 or kphillippe@aacc.nche.edu, or Rahel Tekle, AACC research associate, at 202-416-4508 or rtekle@aacc.nche.edu