



## **Community College Federal Legislative Priorities**

**March, 2020**

### **Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization**

#### **Short-Term Pell Grants**

Establish Pell Grant eligibility for short-term workforce-oriented programs of at least 150 clock hours that are keyed to jobs providing economic benefit.

- Short-term training programs allow students to quickly increase their skill level and earnings, yet program costs are a barrier for many individuals.
- Short-term programs bring new people into the higher education system, an urgent national priority.
- The new program should provide adequate quality safeguards, though community college programs are routinely and thoroughly vetted before being established.

#### **Second Chance Pell Grants**

Overturn the ban on Pell for incarcerated individuals.

- Investing in postsecondary programs in correctional facilities reduces prison expenditures, recidivism, and unemployment among formerly incarcerated individuals. It is a prudent and far-sighted investment that enjoys bipartisan support.
- The longstanding ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals has greatly reduced the number of community college programs available to this population.
- The “Second Chance” Pell experimental site created by the Obama Administration and continued by President Trump has produced valuable information on the benefits of Pell Grant eligibility for prisoners. It is time to extend Pell eligibility beyond the limited number of institutions involved in the program.

#### **Enhance Transparency and Data**

Create a national student unit record data system that accurately tracks completion, transfer and graduates’ earnings. Implement a formal completion rate of 300% of “normal time” for community college programs to accurately reflect their student population.

- A unit record data system will enable students, institutions, and policymakers to make better decisions about postsecondary education.
- A unit record data system will reduce administrative costs by eliminating redundancy in the data currently reported to federal, state, local and private entities.
- Federal reporting and data presentation frameworks need to reflect the actual enrollment patterns of community college students.

## **FY 2021 Funding**

### **Pell Grants**

Increase the maximum award by at least \$200 and keep all reserve funds for Pell Grants.

- Pell Grants are by far the most important form of financial aid for community college students, helping nearly 2.2 million of them gain access to college and succeed each year. Community colleges would have a different face without this foundational program.
- Diverting student aid funds to finance other programs undermines the program's future financial stability and, with that, the ability of millions of students to enroll in college.

### **Strengthening Community College Training Grants**

Increase Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) funding to \$75 million.

- SCCTG supports expanded community college workforce training capacity similar to the Community-Based Job Training Grants and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCT) grants. TAACCT had demonstrable success.
- The SCCTG program is designed to help close the nation's skills gap by making competitive grants to community colleges as lead grantees, working with businesses, 4-year institutions and other partners.

### **Dream Act**

Enact the Dream Act to provide Dreamers with a path to permanent legal status.

- The Dream Act provides a path to citizenship for undocumented young people, including the thousands of students currently enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. These individuals were brought to the U.S. as minors and frequently have no ties to the countries from which they came.
- The administration's DACA rescission (which is currently blocked by federal courts) leaves thousands of young people, including many students, in an uncertain and precarious state. These students need the Dream Act to fulfill their potential.
- A possible Supreme Court decision in favor of the DACA rescission (action is expected by the end of June) would make Congressional action even more imperative.

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