

Community College Funding Priorities

Federal investments in student aid and institutional support are essential to the community college mission of educating Americans for better jobs and supporting local communities. Community colleges offer a broad spectrum of educational offerings for a wide variety of students. Many students need support beyond academic programming, including basic skills education, childcare, and other services. Serving all these students well is instrumental to their personal success and to the strength of the American economy. Community colleges call on Congress to at least maintain current investments in higher education and workforce development programs, with targeted increases as outlined below. Community colleges also urge Congress to insist that the Trump administration distribute any unspent FY 25 funds as directed in appropriations legislation.

Pell Grants

The Pell Grant maximum has been flat for three years, while student costs have risen. In FY26, Congress should at least maintain the maximum grant but ideally increase it by \$200, to help students meet college expenses. While a community college education is extremely affordable (tuition is just \$4,050 for a full-time, full-year student), increasing the grant helps low-income community college students cover more of their total educational costs. Community colleges are grateful for the funds provided to the Pell Grant program in the budget reconciliation legislation. Congress must further increase its investments in the program to avoid a shortfall and keep the maximum award abreast of inflation.

Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG)

Congress should fund the SCCTG program at \$75 million. SCCTG funds partnerships between community colleges, local businesses, and other key partners to expand and improve workforce education capacity. There is growing evidence of this program's positive impact and interest in the program continues to far outpace the number of available grants.

Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III-A of the Higher Education Act)

The Strengthening Institutions Program supports local initiatives for institutions that have relatively low resources and serve high percentages of low-income students. Colleges undergo fierce competition to secure funding consistent with national priorities. Congress should fund the program at \$140 million, reversing the \$10 million FY 2024 cut that was extended through FY 2025.

Perkins Career and Technical Education

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE) programs are the largest ongoing source of federal institutional support for community colleges, helping them improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. Community colleges use Perkins grants to prepare students for high-skill, in-demand fields by helping them meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improve curricula; purchase the equipment students need to know how to use in today's jobs; integrate vocational and academic instruction; and foster better links between colleges and employers. We urge Congress to increase its investment in this program by at least 10% above the FY 24 appropriation and reject the administration's proposal to direct all Perkins funding to secondary education.

NSF Advanced Technological Education Program

The ATE program is the cornerstone of National Science Foundation's support for the nation's community colleges. This program focuses on the education of highly qualified science and engineering technicians for advanced technology fields that drive our nation's economy. It promotes the improvement of STEM education of science and engineering technicians at the undergraduate and secondary school levels, and in the workforce. Congress should adopt the position taken in the report accompanying the Senate Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill, and fund ATE at \$75 million in FY 26.

Workforce Development and Adult Basic Education

The best opportunity for displaced and economically disadvantaged workers is to augment their skills with education. Federal workforce education programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are needed to help individuals navigate the changing economy. Adult Basic Education (ABE) State Grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year to gain reading, numeracy, English literacy, and GED preparation. We recommend at least \$790 million for the ABE State Grants and strong increases for the other WIOA programs. Congress must reject the administration's proposals to greatly reduce the WIOA programs and eliminate ABE.

Other Higher Education Programs

Congress should also deny the administration's proposals to eliminate or greatly reduce TRIO, GEAR-UP, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, Childcare Access Means Parents in School and at least maintain current funding levels for these programs.

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