



2008 Community College Federal Legislative Priorities

Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Budget and Appropriations

Congress should increase the federal investment in higher education and workforce development across the board. Community colleges recommend the following funding levels for programs that are especially important to their educational missions:

1) A Maximum Pell Grant of \$5,100: Community colleges strongly support the Pell Grant program, which each year helps more than 2 million of their financially disadvantaged students pay for tuition, books, living expenses, and transportation. In FY 2009, each student will receive \$490 through entitlement funding provided in last year's budget reconciliation legislation. Therefore, community colleges request an appropriated maximum grant of \$4,610, to provide a \$5,100 maximum grant.

2) \$1.7 Billion for the Perkins Act Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs: The Perkins CTE programs are the largest federal source of institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs that provide workers with the skills they need for the 21st century economy. Increased funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant and Tech Prep programs is crucial to the continued success of the community college workforce development mission.

3) \$250 Million for the Community-Based Job Training Grants: Currently funded at \$125 million, Community-Based Job Training Grants (CBJTG) serve a vital national need—enhancing community colleges' capacity to train workers in high-demand, high-growth industries. The CBJTG program brings together community colleges, local businesses, and the federal workforce investment system to meet the training needs for industries such as health care, advanced manufacturing, and energy.

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization

As Congress works to complete HEA reauthorization legislation (H.R. 4137 and S. 1642 are the respective House and Senate reauthorization bills), community colleges urge the following outcomes:

1) Treat community colleges fairly in creating new policies on college costs: College costs are a legitimate national concern, but Congress should not burden community colleges with expensive and unhelpful new reporting requirements. Community colleges support language that would allow colleges to increase tuitions by as much as \$500 annually, plus an inflation index, before they would be subject to additional reporting requirements or other sanctions.

2) Retain the Community Colleges as Partners in Teacher Education Grants as included in H.R. 4137: Community colleges play a major role in all facets of teacher preparation and development, as recognized by this new program in the House's HEA bill. Community colleges oppose the efforts by some parties to require that four-year colleges (which are the focus of every other HEA teacher training program) be mandatory co-grantees in the community college program.

3) Include “College Partnership Grants” to support improved articulation between community colleges and four-year institutions: Community colleges urge Congress to preserve H.R. 4137’s new grant program that would provide financial incentives to states and institutions to ensure that students are able to enroll in another institution easily and efficiently.

4) Preserve critical provisions contained in both House and Senate bills: In final HEA legislation, Congress should reject the “single definition” of institution of higher education, which would make for-profit colleges eligible for new grant funds at the expense of community colleges; make part-time, certificate, and permanent resident alien students eligible for Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG); and implement the year-round Pell Grant to benefit certificate and part-time students at community colleges.

Workforce Development Legislation

Congress must complete the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization in 2008 to strengthen the federal workforce investment system. Community colleges support legislation that formally authorizes the Community-Based Job Training Grants program, streamlines reporting requirements for training providers, and builds bridges between adult basic education and postsecondary education. Congress should complete reauthorization of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) legislation that expands eligibility to service workers, raises the cap on training funds, and allows workers to use TAA funds to pursue college degrees, as in H.R. 3920.

Tax Policy for College Students

The Hope and Lifetime Learning tax credits need to be made simpler and fairer. The credits should include all non-tuition expenses that are eligible to be paid for with federal student aid funds. In addition, the credits should be made refundable, so that needy students will benefit. Community colleges urge Representatives to co-sponsor H.R. 2458, “the Universal Higher Education and Lifetime Learning Act,” and Senators to support companion legislation, S. 1501.

Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act

Congress should build on the DREAM Act’s progress in 2007, when a majority of the Senate voted in favor of the legislation, and proceed to final enactment in 2008. The DREAM Act (S. 2205, H.R. 1275), which grants legal status to certain undocumented students who were brought to the U.S. as children, would ease the path to higher education for potentially more than one million U.S. high school graduates. Passage of the DREAM Act is a matter of simple justice for these students, and would be a boon for the nation’s economic competitiveness.

Educational Benefits for Military Veterans

Congress should pass the Total Force Educational Assistance Enhancement and Integration Act (S. 644, H.R. 1102), which modifies the Montgomery GI Bill to reflect the current “total force” policy in which the National Guard and Reserve forces play an expanded role. This legislation would increase educational benefits for the National Guard and Reserve forces in proportion to the time they serve on active duty.

If they have not done so already, please urge your Senators and Representatives to join both the House and Senate Community College Caucuses, which were established to educate Congress about our institutions and their key legislative issues. To join in the Senate, offices should contact Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) or Senator Richard Burr (R-NC); in the House, Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC) or Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE) should be contacted.