

2020 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Reauthorize the Higher Education Act

Short-Term Pell Grants

Currently, a program must be two-thirds of a year in length to qualify for Pell Grants. Community colleges offer many short-term workforce-oriented programs, yet cost remains a barrier for many students. Eligibility for shorter-term programs should be established, with safeguards to ensure that only high-quality programs receive support. (JOBS Act, S. 839, H.R. 3497)

- Short-term training programs offer opportunities for students to quickly increase their skill level and earning potential.
- Lowering the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility to 150 clock hours will enable more individuals to access training programs for jobs in high-demand fields.

Increase the Pell Grant Maximum Award

Boost the maximum grant and provide annual inflationary increases to the maximum award using mandatory funding. Pell Grants enable millions of low-income students to pay tuition and fees and other college expenses.

- Increasing the maximum award helps diminish the cost of attendance for low-income students and reduces their need to borrow.
- Pell Grants help expand postsecondary access, lowering the equity gap between low-income students and those with greater financial means.

Second Chance Pell Grants

Overtake the ban on Pell for incarcerated individuals. Scores of community and technical colleges partner with correctional institutions to offer educational programs for incarcerated individuals. However, for more than 25 years incarcerated individuals have been prohibited from using Pell Grants to cover tuition, fees, and course materials.

- 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.
- 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.

Support State Investments in Lowering the Cost of Community College

Establish a federal-state partnership to dramatically enhance college affordability or create tuition-free community college. The federal investment should require states to increase their support of postsecondary education.

- Increasing federal need-based student aid has a limited impact on college affordability if states simultaneously disinvest in higher education. States should be incentivized to sustain and enhance their support of higher education.
- A national program to enhance community college student access and success will increase economic mobility and help sustain economic growth.

Enhance Transparency and Data

Create a national student unit record data system that accurately tracks completion, transfer and graduates' earnings.

- A unit record data system will enhance the accountability of the nation's postsecondary education system. It will allow prospective students 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.
- Congress should create a formal completion rate of 300% of “normal time” for community college programs to accurately reflect the student population enrolled at these institutions (Time for Completion Act, S. 3115, H.R. 3354).

Invest in Education and Workforce Development

Support Student Access and Success

Increase the Pell Grant maximum award in FY 2021 while protecting the program's reserve fund. Funding increases should also be provided for the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work-Study, TRIO, GEAR UP, and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs.

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Increase funding for institutional aid programs, including: Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Title III-A Strengthening Institutions; Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Tribal Colleges; and other programs serving traditionally underrepresented populations.

Bolster Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Enhance funding for Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants, state grants under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program.

Continue to support dedicated community college funding to expand job training programs in in-demand industries by increasing funding for the new Strengthening Community College Training Grants administered by the Department of Labor.

Support Dreamers

Assist Students Impacted by the DACA Rescission

Enact the Dream Act to provide Dreamers with 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 a precarious status. The Dream Act is needed to enable them to reach their full potential.