



2022 Community College Federal Legislative Priorities

In lieu of the Advocacy column usually authored by Jee Hang Lee, we are using this space to highlight this year’s top federal legislative priorities. The Advocacy department will resume in the spring 2022 issue of *Trustee Quarterly*.

Support Dreamers

Enact the DREAM Act

Enact the DREAM Act, once and for all, 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. Dreamers were brought to the U.S. as minors and frequently know no other nation besides America. More importantly, they can make substantial contributions to the U.S. economy and society. Dreamers should also be able to access Title IV student aid funding.

Authorize a Community College Led Job Training Program

Fund a Community College Led Program that Links Training to Jobs

The pandemic’s massive economic dislocation has exacerbated the need for a dedicated community college job training program, one that integrates institutional programs with business and local workforce needs. While today’s economy still has millions of jobs available for qualified applicants, colleges lack funding to effectively address the situation. Community colleges call for a robust investment that builds on the demonstrated success of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, tightly linking training programs to jobs as the economy continues to recover.

Fund Key Education and Workforce Programs

Support Student Access and Success

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

expenses. Increasing the maximum award promotes affordability for low-income students, reducing their need to borrow.

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

Continue to support community college training programs that lead to jobs in in-demand industries by increasing funding for the Strengthening Community College Training Grants administered by the Department of Labor.

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.

Reauthorize the Higher Education Act for Today's Colleges and Students

Work with States to Make Community College Universally Accessible, Promoting Student Success

Establish a federal-state partnership to enhance college affordability and enrollment by creating tuition-free community college. Federal policy should reflect the fact that postsecondary education is now essential to provide family-sustaining wages. States should be incentivized to sustain and enhance their

support of higher education as the federal government helps make community college universally available.

An aligned national program to enhance community college student access and success will help ensure increased economic mobility and help sustain economic growth and positively transform higher education.

Support Pell Grants for Students in Short-Term Workforce Programs

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. To achieve this goal, community colleges strongly support the JOBS Act.

- 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.

Invest in Basic Needs Supports for Students

The true cost of attending community college extends beyond tuition. Most community college students experience unmet financial need to pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. Community colleges support policies that allow students to access vital basic needs services.

- Increasing the capacity of community colleges to connect students with supportive services that will help

ensure students persist and succeed in their postsecondary pathways.

- Existing federal programs including the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) must be strengthened to meet students' true needs.

Focus Student Tax Policy on Those Who Can Benefit Most

End the Taxation of Pell Grants

Currently, Pell Grant awards can be taxed for any amounts that exceed a student's tuition and related expenses. This means that community college students must pay tax on any portion of their Pell Grants that is used to help meet living expenses.

Taxing Pell Grants also prevents thousands of community colleges from receiving the full American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) because of unintended interactions between the programs. It is counterproductive to tax benefits provided to those with extremely limited resources.

Additionally, the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit (LLC) should be altered to provide 100% of the first \$2,000 of tuition and fees paid by those taking job-focused training courses at community colleges. The LLC has not lived up to its promise of helping America re-skill.

Make your voice heard on these important topics by visiting with your members of Congress and talking about this or other key issues. Request a meeting virtually or in person with your legislator. For virtual and other meeting tips, visit www.acct.org/product/advocacy-toolkits. To stay up to date on key legislative items, sign up for ACCT's Latest Action in Washington alerts by emailing publicpolicy@acct.org.