

2026

Community College

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NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

Unveiling of Community College 119th Congressional Priorities





2026

Community College **NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT**

February 8-11, 2026 | Washington, D.C.

Presenters

ACCT

Carrie Warick-Smith

VP, Public Policy

cwsmit@acct.org

Jonathan Elkin

Director, Government Relations

jelkin@acct.org

AACC

David Baime

Sr. VP, Government Relations

dbaime@aacc.nche.edu

Jim Hermes

Assoc. VP, Government Relations

jhermes@aacc.nche.edu

Agenda

Federal Update

- Minibus Includes FY 26 Education Funding
- Negotiated Rulemaking: RISE and AHEAD Committees
- Department of Justice Declares MSIs Unconstitutional
- Department of Education Drops Appeal

Community College 119th Congressional Priorities

Tips and Reminders When Preparing for NLS



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Federal Update



Minibus Includes FY 26 Education Funding

- Congress has a deadline of January 30th to fund the government for fiscal year 2026.
- **Failure to pass the remaining nine appropriations bills or pass a continuing resolution could result in a partial government shutdown.**
- **Current status of appropriations:**
 - 3 bills were passed and signed into law
 - 3 bills were passed by the House and the Senate
 - 2 bills were passed by the House
 - 4 bills were agreed upon by House and Senate appropriators and still need a vote in both chambers
 - This includes Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (\$221 billion)
 - \$78.79 billion would be directed to the Department of Education
- **This week, the Senate is in recess.**



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Minibus Includes FY 26 Education Funding

Increase Funding	Level Funding	Decrease Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)• Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving Institutions (ANNHIs)• Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)• Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs)• Strengthening Asian American- and Native American Pacific Islander-serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)• Strengthening Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs)• Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)• Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum Pell• Federal Work Study (FWS)• Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)• TRIO• Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)• Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)• Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG)• Basic Needs• Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Grants• Adult Education State Grants• Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG)• Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)

Negotiated Rulemaking (Neg Reg)

Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) - Loan Repayment Plans, PLUS Loan Caps

- **November 2025:** Committee reached consensus ([details](#))
- **Expected Late January 2026?** Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for public comment

Accountability in Higher Ed and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD)

- **December 12: Session 1 – Workforce Pell** – Committee reached consensus ([details](#))
- **January 9: Session 2 – Accountability** – Committee reached consensus ([text](#)).
 - Median earnings of prior program completers must \geq high school graduates' earnings.
 - If program fails two of three consecutive years, program loses federal student loan eligibility
 - If $\frac{1}{2}$ a college's students or $\frac{1}{2}$ of Title IV revenue are in low-earnings programs, the institution loses Pell eligibility for all its low-earning programs

Upcoming: NPRM for public comment

July 1: Implementation date



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Department of Justice Declares MSIs Unconstitutional

- In a memo, the Department of Justice (DOJ) identified grants to minority serving institutions (MSIs) as unconstitutional because institutions must have a certain share of their student population belonging to a racial or ethnic group to be eligible.
- This comes in the wake of the Department of Education's September announcement in which \$350 million for MSIs was reprogrammed to support charter schools, American history and civics grants, and a one-time allocation to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

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Department of Justice Declares MSIs Unconstitutional

- The memo lists the following grant programs as unconstitutional, for which the funds are to be repurposed:
 - Hispanic-serving institutions
 - Alaska Native and Native-Hawaiian-serving institutions
 - Native American-serving, nontribal institutions
 - Grants for community-based organizations that primarily provide career and technical education for Native-Hawaiian students
 - Formula-based grants for predominantly-Black institutions, which are intended to be used to improve the colleges' ability to serve low- and middle-income Black students.
- The DOJ determined that the Department of Education can continue certain programs as long as they are race-neutral



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Dept of Education Dismisses Appeal on “DEI Letter”

- **Feb 14:** The Department of Education sent a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) (DCL) to institutions stating that any activities considered Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would preclude them from receiving federal dollars
- The American Federation of Teachers and others sued ED, stating that the DCL is unlawful.
- **April 24:** U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland issued a **stay** on nationwide enforcement of the DCL. On the same day, a federal court issued a **preliminary injunction** for the plaintiffs.
- **August 14:** A U.S. District Court judge [ruled](#) that the **Department of Education acted unlawfully** when issuing the DCL and the FAQ.
 - This ruling [vacated](#) the Department's DCL and FAQ.
- **January 21, 2026:** The Department of Education dropped its appeal, meaning the August court ruling stands.



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Unveiling of Community College 119th Congressional Priorities



Priorities

Strengthen the Bedrock of Student Financial Aid: Pell Grants

Support Programs & Policies that Boost Comm. Colleges as Economic Engines

Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development

Strengthen Accountability and Transparency

Join the House Community College Caucus



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Strengthen the Bedrock of Student Financial Aid: Pell Grants (Appropriate Necessary Dollars)

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate and House Appropriations

Goals:

- Accommodate program growth due to the simplified FAFSA, workforce Pell, and increasing enrollments
- **Increase maximum grant by \$200** to keep pace with inflation and promote affordability, and limit borrowing for low-income students
- Maintain student Pell eligibility, as expanded by the Simplified FAFSA Act and H.R. 1
- Sustain the long-term fiscal health of the program.

Congress has negotiated to **level-fund the maximum Pell** for FY 26 at \$7,395



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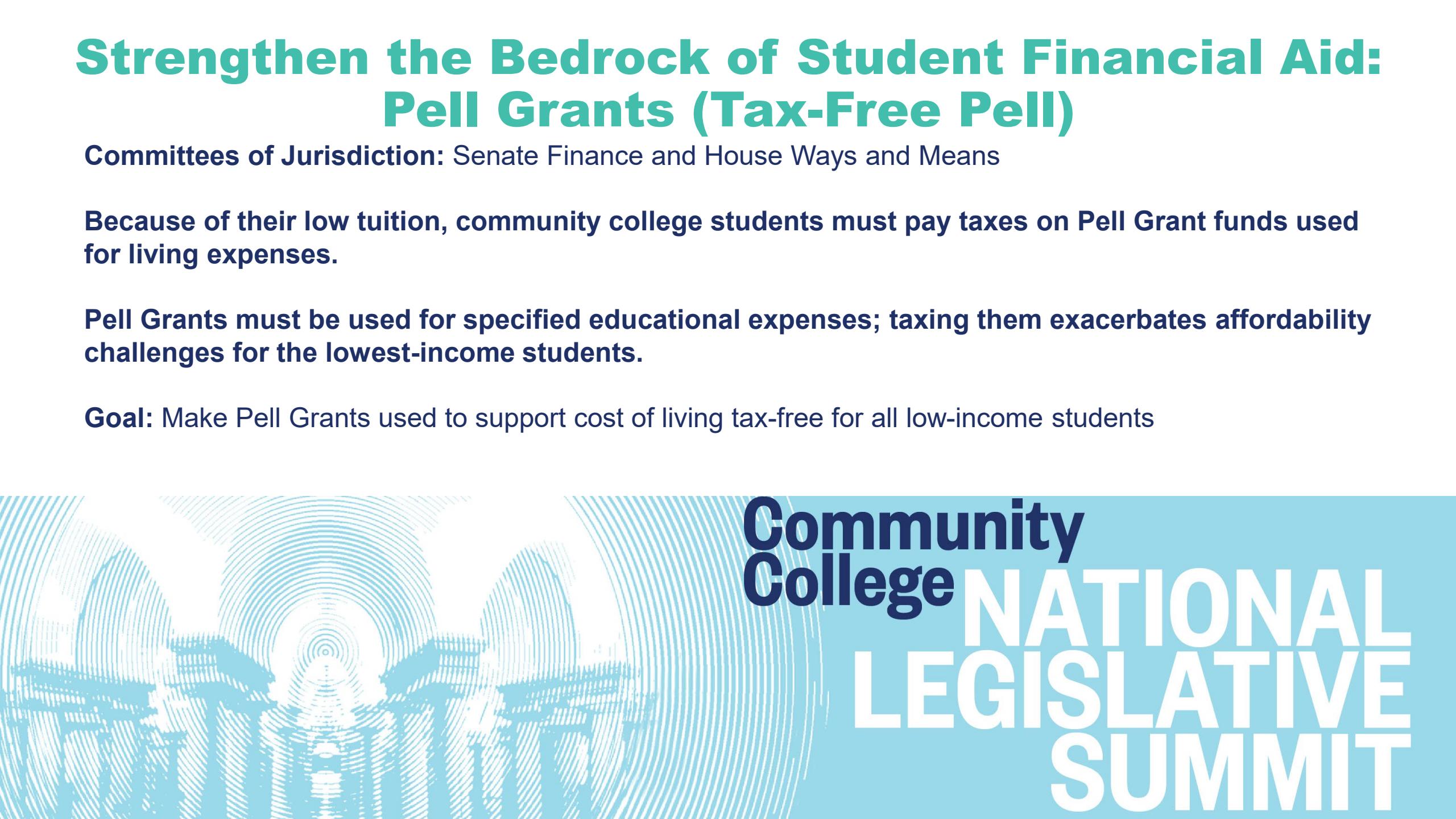
Strengthen the Bedrock of Student Financial Aid: Pell Grants (Tax-Free Pell)

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate Finance and House Ways and Means

Because of their low tuition, community college students must pay taxes on Pell Grant funds used for living expenses.

Pell Grants must be used for specified educational expenses; taxing them exacerbates affordability challenges for the lowest-income students.

Goal: Make Pell Grants used to support cost of living tax-free for all low-income students



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Strengthen the Bedrock of Student Financial Aid: Pell Grants (American Opportunity Tax Credit)

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate Finance and House Ways and Means

Pell Grants render community college students ineligible for the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), as the program's design does not reflect the low tuitions they pay.

Goal: Alter the \$2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit AOTC so that Pell Grant awards are not counted against a student's eligibility.

Outcome: Hundreds of thousands of low-income community college students would receive the credit annually.



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Support Programs & Policies that Boost Comm. Colleges as Economic Engines: Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate and House Appropriations

Institutional aid allows under-resourced institutions to close achievement gaps. Eligible institutions must generally enroll student bodies where at least half of all students are Pell-eligible, and there are relatively low per-student expenditures.

Goals:

- Protect and strengthen total and individual funding for Higher Education Act institutional aid programs in Title III and Title V.
- Ensure the individual program funds are allocated in accordance with FY 2026 levels as determined by Congress
- Provide at least FY24 levels for the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)

Outcome: These critical institutional aid programs support the basic goals of the Pell Grant program.



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Support Programs & Policies that Boost Comm. Colleges as Economic Engines: Ensure America's Economic Prosperity

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate and House Judiciary

Goals:

- Maintain America's economic prominence and ensure that there is an adequate supply of trained workers.
- Retain the bipartisan Congressional priority to pass comprehensive immigration reform

Outcome: This would address undocumented individuals who entered the U.S. as minors and provide opportunities for workers with temporary status.



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Support Programs & Policies that Boost Comm. Colleges as Economic Engines: Buoy Rural Community Colleges

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate and House Agriculture

The Community College Agriculture Advancement Act would provide grants to community colleges for agricultural and natural resources programs that support the growing need for a highly skilled agricultural workforce

Goal: Provide federal funding streams to community colleges to support rural economic development, particularly in the agricultural sector.

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Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development:

Strengthen the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

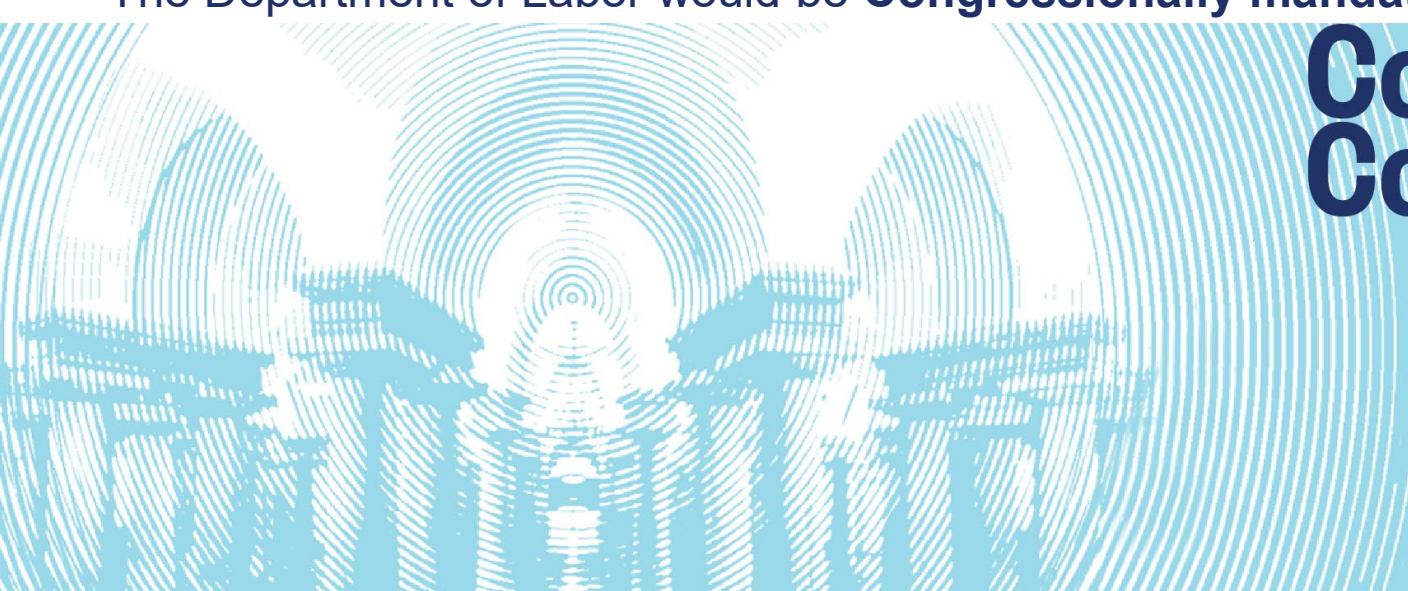
Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce

WIOA legislation should increase emphasis on the role of community colleges in the national workforce.

Goal: Authorize the Strengthening Community College Training Grant (SCCTG) program, which has supported community colleges in 35 states since its inception.

Congress has negotiated to **level-fund SCCTG** for FY 26 at \$65,000,000

The Department of Labor would be **Congressionally mandated to hold a competition** for SCCTG for FY 26

A graphic of three blue fingerprints on a white background, with the text 'Community College NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT' overlaid.

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Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development: Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce, and Senate and House Appropriations

Support community college training programs that lead to in-demand jobs.

Goal: Expand the Department of Labor's Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) program, now in its 7th year.

Program Outcomes: The program is remarkably successful in catalyzing economic activity and regularly receives far more quality applications than can be funded.



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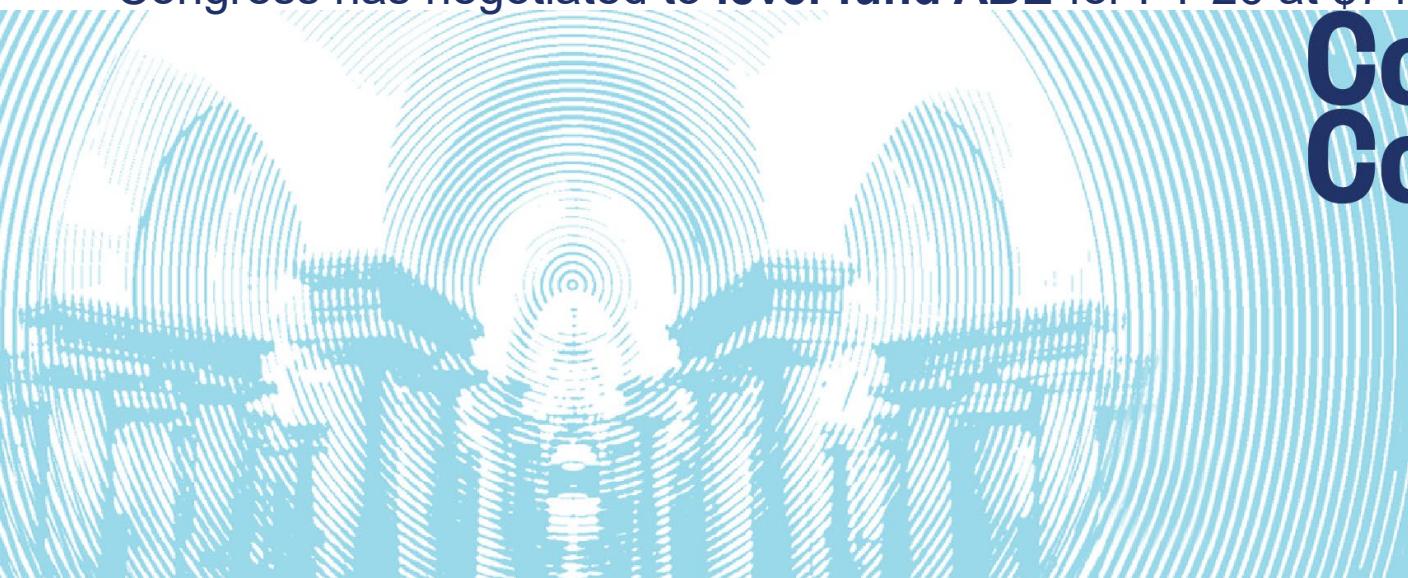
Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development: Support Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce, and Senate and House Appropriations

Continue support for ABE so that adults can gain skills for jobs or be able to participate in further education and training.

Cuts to this program will create even more challenges for businesses seeking qualified workers, and reduce overall access to higher education.

Congress has negotiated to **level-fund ABE** for FY 26 at \$715,455,000



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Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development: Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS)

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce and Senate and House Appropriations

Goal: Reinforce this targeted, two-generation program that helps provide high-quality childcare designed to meet the circumstances of parenting students

Congress has negotiated to **level-fund CCAMPIS** for FY 26 at \$75,000,000

The Department of Education is **required** to conduct a new FY 26 grant competition

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Strengthen Accountability and Transparency

Committees of Jurisdiction: Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce

Support the reintroduction and passage of the bipartisan College Transparency Act (CTA)

Goal of CTA: Create a federal student-level data network for data on postsecondary outcomes

Outcomes of CTA: Enhance the accuracy and fairness of the new Direct Loan accountability measures and Workforce Pell program.

Chair Cassidy (LA) has been the Republican lead of this bill in the Senate



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Join the House Community College Caucus

Jurisdiction: House of Representatives

In 2025, bipartisan members in the House of Representatives relaunched the Congressional Community College Caucus

Co-Chairs: Reps. Bilirakis (R-FL) and Courtney (D-CT)

Membership: 16 Members of Congress

Goal: Provide support for community colleges and a forum to discuss relevant issues

Encourage your member of Congress to join today

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Tips and Reminders for NLS Prep



Gathering Your College Data and Stories

- Collect relevant facts and stats about the institution and student body
 - Enrollment
 - Student profile
- Determine stories to share – student perspective is best
- Prepare federal funds worksheet
- College one-pager

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2023 Legislative Impact for Representative Ann Wagner

Total Students Served

2404

Total Degrees & Certificates Awarded

422

Total Graduates

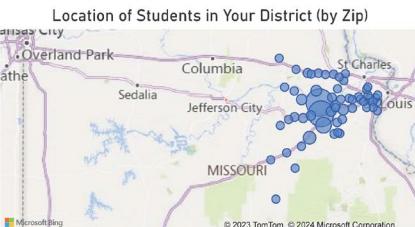
375

Pell Recipients

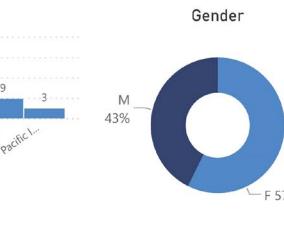
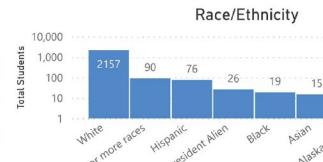
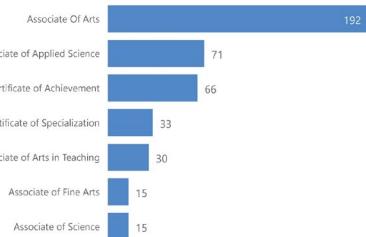
676

Average Pell Award

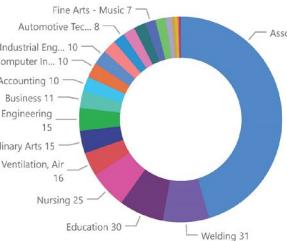
\$3,291



2022-2023 Degrees & Certificates Awarded



2022-2023 Degrees & Certificate Majors



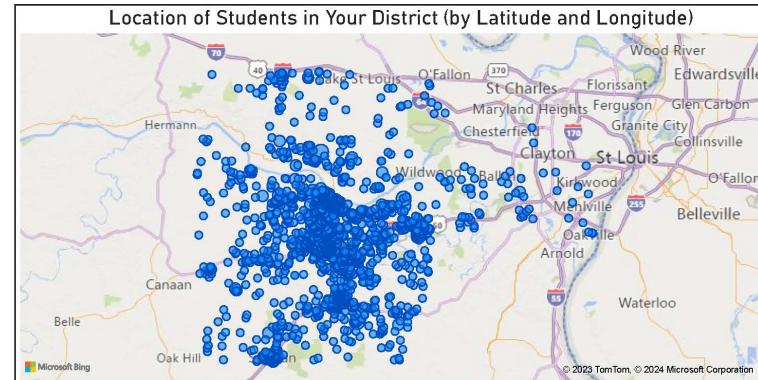
Veteran Status

Veteran Status	% of Students
Non Veteran/Military	97.6%
Veteran	1.2%
Military	0.8%
Spouse/Dependent	0.4%
Active Duty	0.4%

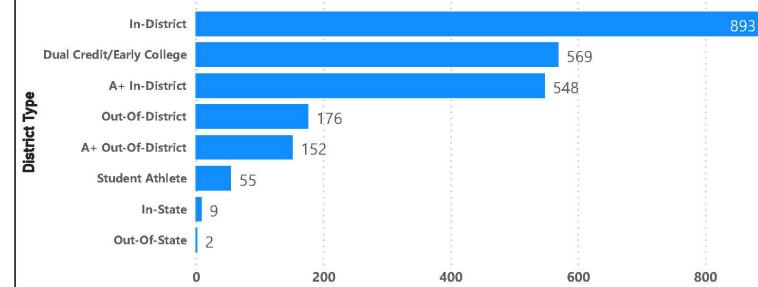
Average Student Age

22

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Total Students by District Type



School District	Total Students	% of Total Students
Washington School District	875	36.4%
Union R-XI School District	661	27.5%
St. Clair R-XIII School District	278	11.6%
Meramec Valley R-III School District	168	7.0%
Sullivan C-2 School District	123	5.1%
Warren County R-III School District	43	1.8%
Lonedell R-XIV School District	39	1.6%
Rockwood R-VI School District	36	1.5%
Gasconade County R-II School District	31	1.3%
New Haven School District	30	1.2%
Spring Bluff R-XV School District	20	0.8%
Franklin County R-II School District	18	0.7%
Wright City R-II of Warren County	16	0.7%
Strain-Japan R-XVI School District	11	0.5%
Francis Howell R-III School District	10	0.4%
Wentzville R-IV School District	10	0.4%
Gasconade County R-I School District	8	0.3%
Parkway C-2 School District	6	0.2%
Lindbergh School District	4	0.2%
Mehlville R-IX School District	4	0.2%
Valley Park School District	4	0.2%
Fort Zumwalt R-II School District	3	0.1%
Kirkwood R-VII School District	2	0.1%
Affton 101 School District	1	0.0%
Bayless School District	1	0.0%
Maplewood-Richmond Heights School District	1	0.0%
Summersville R-II School District	1	0.0%

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Planning Your Meeting: Content

- What are your main asks?
- What data will you share?
- What are your stories/examples?



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Planning Your Meeting: Logistics

- Who serve in which role/cover which topics during the meeting?
- Who is notetaker?
- Which leave behinds will you bring and who brings/shares them?
- Who is responsible for follow up?



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Planning Your Meeting: Tips

- Leave enough time between meetings to get from one place to another.
 - The Congressional Campus is large! Particularly going from the House to the Senate and vice versa
- Arrive early! Member schedules are tight. They may not be able to wait for you.
 - If a prior meeting runs late, update the next office as soon as possible
- Be flexible! Hill offices are small, especially on the House side.
 - If you're meeting with staff only, you may meet at their desk or in a hallway.
- Time may be limited, so cover your top priority first.



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Thank You! See You At NLS!

- Additional resources to prepare for NLS can be found on the “Preparing for NLS” tab of the nls.acct.org website.
- [Sign up](mailto:publicpolicy@acct.org) for our Latest Action in Washington updates at publicpolicy@acct.org or by visiting www.acct.org/advocacy or www.now.acct.org
- Sign up for Community College Daily at <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/publications-news/community-college-daily-feed/>



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