

# 2024 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## Bolster the Role of Community Colleges in Workforce Development

### Support Workforce Pell Grants for Students in Short-Term Programs

Establish Pell Grant eligibility for shorter-term programs, accompanied by rigorous and relevant quality standards. Currently, programs must be two-thirds of a year to be eligible for Pell Grants. This excludes many community college workforce-oriented programs that greatly benefit both students and local businesses. Many students cannot participate in these programs because of their cost. Community colleges support lowering the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility to 150 clock hours, as in the bipartisan JOBS Act (S. 161, H.R. 793) and Workforce Pell Act (H.R. 6585), which would increase access to these programs.

### Strengthen the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Enhance WIOA, and with that the national economy, by bolstering the role of community colleges in the federal workforce development system. WIOA reauthorization legislation should include authorization of the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program, as has been done in A Stronger Workforce for America Act (SWAA, H.R. 6655). This program is entering its fifth year of funding and has supported dozens of successful partnerships between community colleges, local businesses, and other partners to date.

WIOA legislation should also facilitate the inclusion of community college programs on the eligible trainer provider list and streamline reporting requirements. SWAA takes a step in this direction by automatically including programs that qualify for workforce Pell Eligibility on the ETPL. A revised WIOA should also support more training, another major focus of the SWAA.

## Fund Key Education and Workforce Programs

### Support Student Access and Success

Boost the Pell Grant maximum award, at minimum by an inflationary adjustment, and set the long-term goal to double the Pell Grant from the 2021-22 award year to \$13,000. Pell Grants enable millions of low-income community college students to pay tuition and fees and meet other college expenses and are the foundation of all other student aid. Increasing the maximum award promotes affordability and student success for low-income students, while reducing their need to borrow.

Funding increases should also be provided for key financing and student support programs such as

- Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
- Postsecondary Student Success
- Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students programs
- Federal Work-Study
- TRIO
- GEAR UP

### 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); Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); Tribal Colleges; and other programs serving traditionally underrepresented populations. Robust funding for these programs will help reduce achievement gaps at community colleges and other institutions. Additionally invest in programs that support student needs and success such as the Basic Needs Grant and the Postsecondary Student Success Grants.

### 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 program administered by the Department of Labor, now entering its fifth funding cycle.

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.

## **Focus Student Tax Policy on Those Who Can Benefit Most**

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### **End the Taxation of Pell Grants, and Modify the AOTC & LLC**

Make Pell Grants tax-free. Under current law, community college students must pay taxes on any portion of their Pell Grants that is used to help meet living expenses. These are qualified educational expenses for which federal student aid is provided; reducing Pell Grant funds by taxing them makes it even harder for the lowest-income students to succeed in college.

Community colleges also support altering the \$2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) so that Pell Grant awards are not counted against a student's eligibility. This change would help hundreds of thousands of low-income community college students receive the \$2,500 credit each year. These two overdue changes are included in the bipartisan, bicameral "Tax Free Pell Grant Act." (S. 2920, H.R. 3000).

## **Farm Bill**

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### **Support Rural Community Colleges**

Create federal funding streams for community colleges to support rural economic development, particularly in the agricultural sector. Rural community colleges play an increasing role in training workers to support agriculture and ag-related fields. Providing grants to assist community colleges in development and upscaling agricultural and natural resources programs would support the growing need for an agricultural workforce that needs skilled training. This can be achieved through the inclusion of the bipartisan, bicameral Community College Agricultural Advancement Act (S. 1740, H.R. 3425) into the 2024 Farm Bill.

### **Increase Access to SNAP**

Combat food insecurity on campus – a major barrier to student success – by streamlining access to SNAP benefits for eligible community college students, preventing bureaucratic barriers and increasing participation among eligible students. Support SNAP recipients' economic independence by strengthening the SNAP Employment & Training program which many community colleges serve as providers for by passing the SNAP E&T Enhancement Act (H.R. 5362).

## **Support Dreamers**

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### **Enact the Dream Act**

Enact the Dream Act (S. 365, H.R. 16), once and for all, to give Dreamers 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 make substantial contributions to the U.S. economy and society. Dreamers should also be able to access Title IV student aid funding. The DREAM Act has traditionally garnered bipartisan support and work toward this goal must continue.

## **Strengthen Accountability and Transparency**

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### **Utilize Accountability and Transparency Policies that Reflect Needs of Community Colleges**

Create a federal student-level data network to generate accurate, meaningful data on postsecondary outcomes, including post-completion earnings. This can be achieved by passing the College Transparency Act (CTA, S.1349, H.R. 2957). Ensure that cohort default rates or any loan-driven accountability measures reflect the incidence of student borrowing and the student body generally. The combination of these proposals will provide accountability and transparency that is responsive to the community college mission while maintaining integrity in the student aid programs.