



California Community Colleges 2010 Federal Legislative Priorities

The California Community Colleges have an unprecedented opportunity to work in partnership with the federal government in helping jump-start the economy by preparing a skilled workforce that meets the needs of a changing job market. President Barack Obama believes community colleges play a pivotal role in providing access to education to Americans wishing to better their lives and train for jobs of the future.

The President has called for each American to complete at least one year of college and has made clear his desire for the United State to regain its place as a world leader in college attainment. The community colleges are called upon to increase by five million the number of community college graduates and certificate holders in the country by the year 2020.

The California Community Colleges are the largest and most diverse postsecondary system in the country, serving 2.9 million students at 112 colleges throughout the state. One out of every three Californians age 18 to 24 is currently enrolled in a community college and one-quarter of all community college students nationwide are enrolled in a California Community College.

The California Community Colleges have three major federal priorities: (1) increase graduation rates, (2) support new and current veterans seeking college degrees and /or job training, and (3) stimulate the creation and attainment of new jobs.

1. *Act Now in Bolstering College Innovation and Graduation Rates by Supporting H.R. 3221 -- The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009.*

Last September, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3221; the bill is now being considered in the Senate. This critical bill includes the historic American Graduation Initiative, which would provide about \$9 billion in direct assistance to community colleges over the next 10 years. This measure marks the single biggest investment ever proposed by the federal government in the community colleges.

This bill is “self funded” with dollars gained from converting the nation’s current guaranteed student loan system to a more cost-effective federal direct lending program estimated to save billions of dollars over the next 10 years. These savings would be used to:

- Increase funding for Pell Grants by \$40 billion over the next 10 years, which would increase the size and number of awards for students.
 - Fund the American Graduation Initiative, which would provide about \$150 million per year for California’s community colleges to support improvements in student success.
 - Provide \$625 million for community college capitol facilities in California.
- ***The California Community Colleges urge your support in moving rapidly to approve the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009. This measure would save more than \$80 billion over the next 10 years that can be reinvested in enhancing college student success and refueling the economy.***

2. Help Veterans Succeed in College and Life by Supporting a Systemwide Appropriations Request.

California leads the nation with 2.2 million veterans residing in state. Since the passage of the Post – 9/11 GI Bill in 2008, the number of veterans enrolling in postsecondary education has steadily increased each year, with the majority of these students enrolled at California Community Colleges (CCC). Currently, 24,000 Veterans utilize Post – 9/11 GI Bill education benefits at California Community Colleges. In addition, there is an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 active duty personnel enrolled annually at community college campuses across the state, not including dependents. We believe veterans view the CCC system as the most easily accessible and affordable educational option available for reaching their career goals.

Experts on veterans' education issues note that veterans not only must adjust to civilian life and manage a host of social and health issues, but must also adapt to life on college campuses. During this transition, veterans are well served by having a "place" to go to interact with other veterans. This proposal funds the build-out of existing best practices models that offer comprehensive centers where veterans can go to tap the array of services, referrals, peer-to-peer communication and camaraderie needed to succeed as students. In addition, this request includes a data infrastructure component to track the numbers, services accessed, and academic and training outcomes of veterans at California community colleges.

- ***The California Community Colleges urge you to support the Veteran's Appropriations Request to build-out existing best practices at a select number of colleges that serve large numbers of veterans and invest in the infrastructure to help track the progress of veterans on community college campuses.***

3. Stimulate the Creation of New Jobs for Americans by Supporting H.R. 2847 – Jobs for Main Street.

This bill passed the House last December and is now in the Senate. The bill stimulates the economy by providing \$75 billion for critical job growth, \$23 billion of which would go to states to create new education jobs over the next two years. This program would provide new competitive workforce grant opportunities for community colleges.

- ***The California Community Colleges urge your support of this important job creation bill. The State of California is experiencing a 12.9 % unemployment rate, with record number of dislocated workers attending Community Colleges for retraining. This bill would help the colleges open new course sections to accommodate demand and train adults to move quickly into the workforce.***