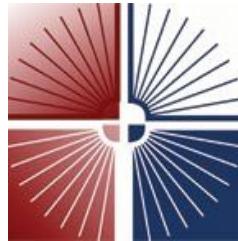




CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES  
CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF  
CALIFORNIA



# Federal Priorities

February 2017

The California Community College system is the largest higher education system in the country and the largest workforce provider in California. More than 2.1 million students receive educational services including general education courses toward a degree, certificate, or transfer to a 4-year institution, career training, basic skills and remedial education, and adult education. Over 50 percent of all students attaining bachelor's degrees at the California State University and nearly 30 percent at the University of California start their four-year studies at a California community college. Our colleges train 70 percent of California's nurses and 80 percent of the state's firefighters, law enforcement personnel, and emergency medical technicians.

California Community Colleges have identified the following critical federal advocacy issues:

## **Reduce Financial Barriers to Higher Education**

California has the largest “free community college” program in the nation; more than 70% of our full-time students receive free tuition under the Board of Governors Fee Waiver program. Yet, the state’s community college students face substantial financial barriers to completion. Over a third of our students experience housing insecurity and 12 percent experience food scarcity. Inadequate financial aid forces students to take fewer classes or work longer hours, these choices make them less likely to be academically successful. Pell Grants are essential to expanding access and enhancing college completion for low-income community college students. In 2014-15, Pell Grants represented more than \$1.75 billion in federal aid to approximately 502,550 California community college students.

Congress can Support Improvements to Pell Grants by:

- Reinstating year-round Pell Grants and
- Increasing eligibility from 12 to 14 semesters and encouraging students to enroll full-time.
- Indexing Pell Grants with inflation.
- Simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to increase completion.

## **Protect Vulnerable Students – The California Dreamers**

As a state, we have promised all Californians – regardless of where they were born – access to a quality education. The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office has reassured students that our campuses will remain safe, welcoming places, for students of all backgrounds to learn.

To build on these important efforts, we ask Congress to:

- Preserve DACA, provide protected status to its recipients, and allow undocumented immigrants who are DACA-eligible to apply for temporary protected status.
- Retain Title IV funding for colleges that provide in-state tuition or equitable financial aid eligibility to all students, regardless of immigration status.

### **Support International Collaboration and Exchange**

International students, faculty, researchers and staff on our campuses add to the diversity of backgrounds and experiences. California is a destination choice for some of the world's best and brightest students and academics. International scholars bring technological and scientific advances that are essential to our economic growth.

We ask Congress to support immigration policies that welcome those who seek to study, conduct research and scholarship, and contribute their knowledge and talents to our country.

### **Provide Quality Federal Oversight – Help Colleges Focus on Educating Our Students**

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that colleges that receive taxpayer funds provide a quality education to students. Similarly, California's community colleges have invested in accountability frameworks aimed at measuring success, including the Student Success Scorecard and the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Indicators.

We ask Congress to consider the below changes to ensure robust accountability and allow public colleges to focus more on education and less on administrative tasks:

- Prevent duplicative federal reporting requirements that force public colleges to spend valuable resources on processing and reporting metrics to the federal government.
- Ensure that any new rules regarding risk sharing or cohort default rate sanctions provide flexibility for public colleges with very low number of borrowers.
- Implement a federal student unit record system for Title IV eligible institutions that can accurately track students through their collegiate career.
- Align various reporting and outcome standards contained in the Higher Education Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

### **Support Community College Veterans**

With an estimated 1.8 million veterans residing in California, the state's veteran population is the largest in the nation. Many of the increasing number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will look to one of the 113 community colleges as the most easily accessible and affordable educational option available. In fact, more than 61,000 veterans and active duty service members, enrolled at a community college in 2013-14.

The California Community Colleges urges Congress to fund more counselors for veteran students and fund the Centers for Excellence for Veteran Success in the Higher Education Act.

## **Support Colleges as an Essential Part of Our County's Infrastructure**

President Trump has emphasized the importance of updating our nation's infrastructure as an economic stimulus. Colleges have significant facility needs. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office estimates that over the next 10 years our colleges will need to spend \$28 Billion to either update or build new facilities. A stimulus plan that includes colleges would help build state of the art facilities, ensure classrooms meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, and help colleges better serve growing populations of students such as veterans.

## **A Workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Targeted investments in education and job training are key to increasing the nation's economic competitiveness. We support proposals to invest in our nation's infrastructure because they will create thousands of new jobs. Employers report shortages of qualified workers for a wide range of jobs in construction, welding, HVAC, engineering, information technology and other infrastructure-related fields.

California's community colleges are well positioned to be key players in working with the federal government to prepare a skilled workforce that meets the needs of a changing job market. Any federal infrastructure investment plans should include funding to support partnerships between community colleges and businesses to train workers in high need fields. Through a continued partnership with the federal government, California's community colleges will help provide the job training needed to build economic growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Specifically, to ensure this successful partnership, the following programs should be restored to their pre-sequestration levels of Fiscal Year 2016, adjusted for inflation:

- Perkins Act Grants – These resources help both high school and community colleges offer career technical education courses and incentivize the two systems to build strong partnerships.
- Workforce, Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs: Provide vital funding for job training to dislocated workers, low-income adults and at-risk youth.