

Federal Policy and Advocacy Update

UPDATE ON THE BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

On February 2, Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) reiterated his opposition to the social spending bill known as the Build Back Better Act (BBBA), citing his concerns over rising inflation, Coronavirus response, and the national debt. However, Democratic leadership remains hopeful that they can enact portions of the package in areas where there is broad agreement, including some climate and clean energy provisions. It is currently unclear if moderate Democrats will support the inclusion of higher education spending in a pared back version of the BBBA. As of this writing, formal negotiations have yet to resume between Mr. Manchin and the White House.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT 2022

In February, the Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors leadership will conduct virtual advocacy visits with Members of Congress to elevate California Community Colleges' policy priorities. These virtual advocacy meetings are a joint effort with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and Community College League of California. The delegation will advocate for the expansion and strengthening of federal financial aid programs, expanded protections for undocumented students, and increased funding for federal workforce programs.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

On February 3, the U.S. Department of Education announced that it is accepting applications for a new \$198 million grant fund under the American Rescue Plan to support students and institutions with the greatest unmet needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In awarding funds, the Department will prioritize community colleges that serve a high percentage of low-income students and have experienced enrollment declines since the start of the pandemic. Grant funds will be allocated based on the amount institutions were eligible to receive under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA). Institutions may use grant funds to defray expenses associated with COVID-19 (including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, faculty and staff trainings, and payroll); and to issue additional Emergency Financial Grants to Students, which may be used for any component of the student's total cost of attendance. The application deadline is April 4, 2022. Details of how to apply can be found on the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov/) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/>) by inputting the document number: 2022-02338.

In a speech delivered on January 27, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona outlined his administrative priorities for the U.S. Department of Education in 2022. In his remarks, Mr. Cardona reiterated his commitment to make higher education more accessible and affordable, and to hold higher education institutions accountable for delivering strong outcomes. He also outlined a goal to work with the Department of Commerce and

Department of Labor to create or expand career pathways at community colleges, targeting underrepresented groups and those displaced by the pandemic.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On February 2, the House began consideration of the America Competes Act, bipartisan legislation that makes new investments in scientific research and manufacturing to boost America's global competitiveness. As of this writing, the House is debating a number of amendments, and though certain provisions may change, the bill would provide substantial benefit to community colleges. Specifically, it would allocate new funding to increase apprenticeship opportunities for underserved populations and would provide \$9 billion over 7 years to revive the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program to expand short-term training programs for in-demand jobs. Further, the bill would authorize a new competitive grant program to support the development and implementation of postsecondary STEM pathways.