

Federal Policy and Advocacy Update

FEDERAL ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT 2022

In February, the Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors leadership conducted 23 virtual advocacy visits with Members of Congress and their staff to elevate California Community Colleges' policy priorities. These meetings were conducted in partnership with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, and the Student Senate for California Community Colleges. The delegation advocated for the expansion and strengthening of federal financial aid programs, expanded protections for undocumented students, and increased funding for federal workforce programs. Overall, there was broad agreement among Members of Congress on the need to increase educational supports and student aid to close equity gaps and advance student success. Over the coming months, the Government Relations Division will continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with key members of Congress to advance our policy priorities.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

On March 2, President Biden unveiled his 2022 higher education priorities during his State of the Union address, urging Congress to provide additional assistance for low-income students to increase college access and affordability. Specifically, the President proposed a \$2,000 increase in the maximum Pell Grant and a broadening of Pell eligibility to Dreamers. The President also called on Congress to expand existing institutional aid grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to strengthen their educational programs in high-demand fields, such as STEM, computer sciences, nursing, and allied health. Work based learning also remains a key priority of the administration, and President Biden elevated the need to increase access to Registered Apprenticeship opportunities to provide a pathway to social and economic mobility. Notably absent from the President's remarks was any reference to tuition free community college, which was a major priority of the administration in 2021. In recent months, both the President and the first lady have acknowledged that tuition free community college will no longer be included in the Build Back Better Act due to opposition from moderate Senate Democrats.

On February 25, the Department of Labor announced it is accepting applications for a new \$113 million grant program to expand and modernize Registered Apprenticeship Programs by implementing evidence based strategies, increasing the capacity of Registered Apprenticeship hubs, and diversifying the industries that utilize Registered Apprenticeships. Public higher education institutions are eligible to apply on the Department of Labor's website. The application deadline is April 25, 2022.

On February 14-18, the U.S. Department of Education held the second of three negotiated rulemaking sessions covering several institutional accountability topics. Most notably, the negotiated rulemaking committee discussed a proposal to implement a new iteration of Gainful Employment regulations intended to hold poor-performing career education programs accountable for saddling their students with unmanageable loan debt and low

earnings. The Gainful Employment rule was enacted in 2014 under the Obama administration but was later rescinded in 2019 by the Trump administration. The committee could not reach consensus on a proposal put forward by the Department that would penalize programs where median graduates have student loan payments that exceed either 20 percent of their discretionary income or 8 percent of their annual earnings. Programs that fail those metrics for two out of three years would lose access to Title IV federal financial aid. The Department will incorporate the committee's feedback into updated regulatory text to be discussed during the third negotiated rulemaking session on March 14-18, and will seek to reach consensus.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On February 4, the House passed the America Competes Act, bipartisan legislation that makes new investments in scientific research and manufacturing to boost America's global competitiveness. The Senate passed its own version of the bill last summer called the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, and will work in the coming weeks to reconcile differences between the two bills. The America Competes Act would increase apprenticeship opportunities for underserved populations, 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, and would authorize a new competitive grant program to support the development and implementation of postsecondary STEM pathways. Further, the bill extends Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in short-term job training programs of at least 150 clock hours over a period of at least eight weeks. Programs would have to meet several criteria before becoming eligible, including a requirement to demonstrate a median earnings increase of at least 20% for program completers six months after completion. Notably, the bill excludes Pell eligibility to students enrolled in short-term training programs at for-profit institutions and for programs taught primarily online, including those at public institutions.

APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

On February 18, President Biden signed into law a Continuing Resolution (CR) to extend funding for the federal government through March 11, averting a government shutdown. This marks the third time Congress has passed a short-term spending bill to keep the federal government running since the fiscal year began in October 2021. Also on February 18, House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership reached a broad agreement on a bipartisan framework for FY2022 appropriations, and are hopeful that a full-year spending package can be approved for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends on September 30. As of this writing, lawmakers are debating a number of higher education provisions, including a \$68 million increase for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), a \$244 million increase for Federal Work-Study, and a \$400 increase to the maximum Pell Grant award for the 2023-24 academic year.