



2023 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

FEBRUARY 2023

2022 Celebrations

We thank Congress for the many wins for higher education achieved with the FY23 Omnibus bill! Because of Congress, we celebrate increases of:

- \$500 for Pell Grants for a total of \$7,395 maximum award for the 2023-24 school year.
- \$50 million to support Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- \$50 million and \$25 million for career-technical and adult education state grants.
- \$54 million for the TRIO program to serve low-income and first-generation college students.
- \$10 million for Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grants to provide child care assistance to students with children.
- \$15 million for the Strengthening Community College Training Grant (SCCTG) program to fund innovative career pathway programs.
- \$116 million for the Fund to Improve Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grants, which support rural colleges, minority serving institutions, open textbook pilots, and more.
- \$137 million to assist Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in the Aid for Institutional Development account.

Pell Grants

By expanding college access, Pell Grants help narrow the postsecondary achievement gap between low- and moderate-income students and those of greater means. They boost college enrollment, reduce drop-out rates, and improve student outcomes.

We advocate for two policy changes to the Pell Grant program:

- **Enact the “Tax-Free Pell Grant Act,”** which eliminates the taxation of Pell Grants, providing substantial financial benefit to the neediest community college students.
- **Authorize “Workforce Pell,”** which extend Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, short-term training programs offered by institutions of higher education.

Finally, we encourage Congress to **ensure Pell Grant reserve funds remain dedicated to the Pell Grant program** to safeguard the program's future financial stability.

Farm Bill

We urge your support to **create a new USDA program, Capacity Building Grants for Community College Agriculture and Natural Resources Programs.** This \$150 million program will help secure the pipeline of educated and trained workers for the 21st century agricultural and natural resources workforce. While previous Farm Bills have carved out funding opportunities for institutions that are not federally designated as land-grant institutions, community and technical colleges generally have not benefited. This program will benefit the nation by assuring a pipeline of trained US agricultural workers, a reliable supply of healthy foods, and promotion of sustainable farming methods.

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Workforce Development and Adult Basic Education

Federal workforce and adult education programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are needed to help individuals navigate the changing economy. The best option for displaced and economically disadvantaged workers is to augment their skills with education combined with training in a high-wage, high-demand career. We recommend **reauthorization of WIOA** to include alternatives to testing for adult education programs as described in the **WORKS Act**, and strong increases for the Title I-IV WIOA programs.

Congress can further increase credential attainment and job placement by **authorizing and growing the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program** in a WIOA reauthorization.

Veterans

Fund new and existing programs to better serve veteran students. Enact reforms that **protect veterans against exploitation** of their GI Bill education benefits.

Dreamers

Enact the Dream Act and grant Dreamers access to student federal aid. **Protect Dreamers** from deportation and establish pathways to permanent legal status.

Basic Needs Supports

The true cost of attending a community or technical college extends well beyond tuition. Many community and technical college students still cannot pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. According to a new survey and report by Western Washington University and the Washington Student Achievement Council, about half of Washington college students report experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity or homelessness.¹ **Community and technical colleges support policies that address this by providing greater access to vital basic needs services.**

Therefore, we recommend that Congress:

- Increase the capacity of community colleges to connect students with supportive services to help them persist and succeed in postsecondary education. The promising new Basic Needs and Postsecondary Student Success programs tackle some of these issues and should be greatly expanded.
- **Remove work requirements on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** that prevent students from accessing food benefits, including on college campuses.
- Enhance supports for SNAP E&T students by **treating required textbooks the same as tuition expenses**, not as participant reimbursements.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Replace the state work participation rate with an **outcomes-based performance measurement system** that would evaluate states on how well they did in helping TANF recipients achieve employment, earnings, and credential-attainment goals using metrics similar to those in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Increase the lifetime cap on vocational training for TANF recipients from 12 to 24 months. This will align with Washington state's WorkFirst program and help students reach credentials that lead to living-wage jobs.

Remove the distinction between "core" and "noncore" activities that count toward a TANF recipient's work requirement. A noncore activity — which includes adult basic education — counts only when the recipient spends a certain number of hours in a "core" activity (such as employment).

Remove TANF and Unemployment Benefits from counting against SNAP benefits. This reduces benefit cliffs and provides equitable access to food.

Notes:

1. Washington Student Achievement Council and Western Washington University. "Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students." January 2023. https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023_BasicNeedsReport.pdf