



2024 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

JANUARY 2024

Key Student Support Programs

Washington's community and technical colleges support robust increases to key college programs as part of the annual budget and appropriations process.

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.

Specifically, we support:

- **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.
- **Support the "JOBS Act,"** which expands student eligibility for Pell Grants to job training in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand industries.

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

Basic Needs Support

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 2023 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 and technical colleges to connect students with supportive services to help them persist and succeed in postsecondary education. The promising 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.
- Support SNAP recipients' economic independence by strengthening the SNAP Employment & Training program which many community colleges serve as providers for by passing the SNAP E&T Enhancement Act (HR 5362).

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 well-being, 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.

— over —

CONTACT INFORMATION

Arlen Harris
p: 360-704-4394
e: aharris@sbctc.edu

William Durden
p: 360-704-4326
e: wdurden@sbctc.edu

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.

Higher Education Act

Strong federal investment in student and institutional aid and for Higher Education Act (HEA) policies that best serve our nation’s community colleges and their students like the College for All Act.

Community and technical colleges continue to serve as an affordable option for many students, especially those from low-income families, first in their families to go to college, and historically underserved populations. The **College for All Act would expand access to college** for many of the very students served by community and technical colleges by eliminating tuition and fees for eligible students, revising the Pell Grant program, and reauthorizing programs that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Job Training and Workforce Development

Washington’s 34 community and technical colleges serve people of all ages and backgrounds right in their local communities, providing the education and training that leads to well-paying jobs, career mobility and university study. Whether students are 16 or 60, urban or rural, just out of high school or working adults, our colleges prepare them for the next step up in life.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

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. This grant program supports workforce development opportunities. The SCCTG program builds capacity at community and technical colleges for dislocated workers, those new to the workforce, and workers looking to advance their careers.

Institutional Support

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.

Title III-A Strengthening Institutions Program

Support the 2025 Title III-A Strengthening Institutions Program, which helps colleges better serve low-income students. This may include planning, faculty development, and student service programs to retain students and move them through to program completion.

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>