



## 2025 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

JANUARY 2025

### 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. We support:

- Extending Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, workforce-oriented short-term programs offered by community and technical colleges.
- Helping safeguard the Pell Grant program's future financial stability by ensuring Pell Grant reserve funds remain dedicated to the Pell Grant program.
- Ending the taxation of Pell Grants and altering the eligibility criteria for the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) so that low-income community college students can qualify.

#### Basic needs support

The true cost of attending a community or technical college extends well beyond tuition. Many students still cannot pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. About half of Washington college students report experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity or homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Community and technical colleges support policies that address this by providing greater access to vital basic needs services.

- Strengthen TRIO, GEAR UP, CCAMPIS, Postsecondary Student Success Grants, Basic Needs Grants and other student support programs that help community colleges meet the needs of all students.
- Streamline and support access to key public benefits programs for eligible community college students, including SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, TANF, and public housing programs.

### Job training and workforce development

Washington state's community and technical colleges serve people right in their local communities, providing the education and training that leads to well-paying jobs, career mobility, and university studies. Whether students are 16 or 60, urban or rural, just out of high school or working adults, our colleges prepare our current and future workforce.

- Congress should enact Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization legislation. WIOA was last reauthorized over 10 years ago and must be updated to keep up with a rapidly evolving economy that requires new skillsets from its workforce. Title II of WIOA funds adult basic education that serves as foundational education for upskilling the workforce. In Washington state, these funds support our nationally-recognized High School Plus and Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs.
- Congress can further increase credential attainment and job placement by authorizing and growing the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program as part of WIOA reauthorization, as is done in the House's A Stronger Workforce for America Act (SWAA).

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## Higher Education Act

Washington's community and technical college system advocates for strong federal investment in student and institutional aid and for higher Education Act (HEA) policies that best serve our nation's community and technical colleges and their students. Specifically, we ask Congress to:

- Ensure that loan subsidies are targeted on those borrowers who need them most and focus repayment flexibility on students who borrow smaller amounts. Tie borrowing limits to enrollment intensity and give institutions more authority to limit borrowing in defined circumstances.
- Ensure that the Department of Education effectively implements the FAFSA Simplification Act and Title IV programs generally without undue regulatory burdens, while ensuring that the agency has adequate administrative funding for this purpose.
- Support an independent accreditation process that provides necessary quality assurance for the federal government and other stakeholders without limiting autonomy or innovation.

### 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>