

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
2009 Federal Legislative Talking Points
February 2009

The California Community Colleges are a strategic resource for the state's workforce development and economic recovery efforts. As such, the colleges are actively engaged in advocating for greater support from the Federal Economic Stimulus package known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The following highlights key features of the stimulus package that benefit the California Community Colleges. Please note, the legislation continues to move on a fast track and is still subject to change.

Federal Economic Stimulus

1. ***Keeping Pace with Demand for High-Skilled Job Training.*** Both the House and the Senate bills provide significant new job training funding. The House provides \$4 billion and the Senate provides \$3.6 billion. In addition, the Senate measure permits the Workforce Investment Boards to provide "full cost" funding for community colleges to provide job training. Retention of this language is critical for community colleges to receive significant new funding to support high-cost, high-demand programs, particularly in allied health and green technology job fields.

The California Community Colleges support the funding level contained in the House legislation, but support the language in the Senate bill that permits the Workforce Investment Boards to provide community colleges "full-cost" recovery for providing job training programs.

2. ***Providing State Relief.*** The stimulus plan provides \$79 billion in new resources as part of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Sixty-one percent or \$39 billion are directed to education. California is poised to receive about \$7.8 billion from this fund to restore K-12 and higher education funding to 2008 levels.

To maximize the benefit of this new funding, California community colleges support waiving the Maintenance of Effort requirements and giving the states flexibility to use these funds to address critical education priorities.

3. ***Investing in College Infrastructure.*** Both stimulus bills provide new funding for higher education facilities modernization. The House measure provides \$6 billion for this purpose, while the Senate bill provides \$3.5 billion in funding. The Senate measure includes extremely favorable language that guarantees community colleges a minimum share of funding at the state level equivalent to their relative FTES.

Community colleges strongly support the language in the Senate bill guaranteeing community colleges a minimum share of funding at the state level based on their per FTES. The colleges also support the funding level in the House measure.

4. **Increasing Student Affordability.** The federal stimulus package contains several important initiatives that make college more affordable for community college students.

- College Tax Credit Overhaul--Both House and Senate bills include variations of President Obama's "American Opportunity Tax Credit." This proposal would create a \$2,500 higher education tax credit (including tuition, fees, textbooks and materials) that is available for the first four years of a student's college education. The House measure provides a tax credit that is 40% refundable, while the Senate bill provides a 30% refundable tax credit.

The California community colleges strongly support this proposal, but seek a modification that would allow students to claim the same eligible expenses used for federal student aid programs. This provision is particularly important for low income students in California, which has a particularly high cost of living.

- Pell Grant Funding increases--The House legislation provides a \$500 increase in the Pell Grant maximum for the next two years, bringing the maximum for the upcoming year to \$5,350. The Senate bill provides smaller increases of \$281 for 2009-10 and \$400 for 2010-11. The program currently serves more than 2 million low-income community college students nationwide. California community college students represent about 265,000 or 15 % of Pell Grant recipients in the country. Demand for Pell Grants is also on the rise. The number of California Pell Grant students has grown by about 30,000 recipients or 10% in the past 5 years. The Pell Grant program is critical to maintaining college access for the poorest community college students.

Community colleges urge the Senate to maintain a commitment to increase Pell Grant funding similar to the funding level contained in the House version of the bill.

Making the Local Connection

1. Spend time sharing best practices and innovative programs administered at the member's local college campus or campuses. This is a good time to talk about federally funded programs, such as TRIO, GEAR UP and Career Technical Education, new business partnerships, enrollment demand for high-skill training and other important developments.
2. Invite your Congressional member to your campus and talk about joint activities in which the campus and member can participate together.
3. Take photos with your member of Congress and include in local media, your local campus newspaper and other college publications.