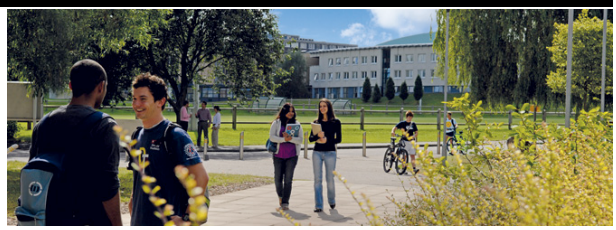

Community Colleges

Federal Funding Opportunities

WASHINGTON, D.C. - As state revenue continues to decline and those looking to re-enter the workforce increases, community colleges will need increased support to cope with state and local funding reductions and the surge in enrollments.

American Graduation Initiative

In July 2009, President Barack Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative as a way to provide higher training to workers whose jobs have been permanently lost in a changing economy. This is an initiative that will invest $12 billion in community colleges nationwide over the next 10 years. While the President continues to support community colleges to play a leading role in 21st century job training, he is making federal funds available to help community colleges modernize their facilities, create public private partnerships, job-ready training skills, upgraded counseling, increase the quality of online courses and ultimately meet the goal of graduating 5 million more Americans from community colleges by 2020. In addition, the President recently outlined measures to make it easier for the unemployed to pursue a degree or training and get help paying for it. And through the White House Automotive Task Force, additional funding may become available to communities negatively affected by the auto industry.

This month, at a recent Summit on Community Colleges, the President announced two grants to support his initiative of graduating more students from community colleges.

Community colleges to aggressively seek federal funding

The President's support of community college education provides great impetus for community colleges to aggressively seek federal funding for a variety of programs and projects that will help the President achieve his goal of increasing community college enrollment.

For example, while a majority of community colleges seek federal grants, there are others that have received federal appropriations (or earmarks) for nursing programs, workforce and job training related programs, homeland security, biomedical research facilities, energy education, technology enhancements, infrastructure and buildings, and other opportunities.

However, despite these earmarks, community colleges receive far less facilities financing from state and local governments than their peers in four-year institutions.
As a result, many community colleges will aggressively seek federal funding when it becomes available, or at least they should.

There are a number of members of Michigan's Congressional Delegation that support community colleges and are members of the Community College Caucus. This includes: Sen. Debbie Stabenow and, Reps. Dave Camp, John Conyers, Vern Ehlers, Sander Levin, Thad McCotter, Candace Miller, Dale Kildee, Bart Stupak and Fred Upton. While the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of Community College Trustees provide valuable resources in representing industry interests as a whole before Congress and the various federal agencies, and may at times identify grants or other funding opportunities, they will not advocate for individual earmarks for individual colleges.

In addition, with the departures of Reps. Stupak, Ehlers, Hoekstra and Kilpatrick, our influence in Washington is changing, and we need to develop deeper relationships with our new members of Congress.

There are a number of community colleges throughout the country, including here in Michigan, that have recognized a renewed focus on community colleges by Congress and the President. In fact, a number of them have retained lobbyists to advocate on their behalf for individual earmarks and to help direct federal public policies that will affect their college, their research and the programs they provide the students and community.

If Members of Congress don't know what the needs of Michigan's community colleges are, then they can't advocate for them or seek funding opportunities. Therefore, advocacy in and before Congress is vital to the colleges growth.

"Community colleges are also an integral part of economic recovery of America."
-- Dr. Jill Biden (wife of Vice President Joe Biden)

COMMUNITY COLLEGES RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDING IN 2010

$317,000 to Clatsop Community College (OR) for equipment and technology for its Technology for Student Access Initiative

$397,000 to West Shore Community College (MI) for workforce investment and training for unemployed individuals.

$496,000 to Iowa Lakes Community College to create a Wind Energy and Turbine Technology education program

$96,000 to Washington State Community College (OH) for construction of a conference center

$199,000 to Central Maine Community College, for education programs, student recruitment and marketing activities

$250,000 to the Montgomery County Community College for facilities construction of the Small Business Development & University Transfer Center in Pottstown, PA

$250,000 to the Riverside Community College in Riverside (CA) for facilities construction &renovation improvements

$72,750 to the Southwest Tennessee Community College for expansion of a biotechnology building in Memphis, Tenn.

$250,000 for Metropolitan Community College of Omaha, Nebraska, for construction of a Health Careers Center

For more information

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