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NJ COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Community colleges are by far the largest provider of higher education in New Jersey. With nearly 400,000 students at over 70 campuses throughout the state, community colleges now enroll over 60 percent of all undergraduates at New Jersey's public colleges. Federal funding is critical to our colleges, our students, and the nation's continued economic growth and prosperity. While mindful about the continuing federal fiscal challenges, New Jersey's 19 community colleges are united in their strong support of the following 2017 federal community college priorities.

1. **SUPPORT Pell Grants** – Pell grants are by far the single largest source of federal funding for New Jersey's community colleges. Last year over 80,000 New Jersey community college students received over \$270 million in Pell funding. We recommend that Congress support the following Pell priorities:

- Reinstatement of the Year-Round Pell Grant (included in Senate Appropriations Committee bill).
- Allow students to receive Pell Grants for 14 semesters (used to be 18; changed to 12 in 2012).
- Allow Pell Grants for short-term workforce training programs.
- Fully reinstate the eligibility for students without a high school diploma but who can demonstrate an "ability to benefit" either through the successful completion of classes or by passing a placement test.

We understand that restoration of Pell eligibility as recommended above will not be easy. However, it is important to recognize that the Pell restrictions enacted several years ago have had an especially harmful impact on "nontraditional" community college students. Going forward Congress should be especially mindful about the impact on these students in future Pell funding negotiations.

2. **SUPPORT Perkins Vocational Education Basic State Grants** – New Jersey's community colleges receive nearly \$8 million annually in Perkins funding to strengthen career and technical training programs. It is one of the largest federal sources of direct institutional support to our colleges. These funds support the training of first responders and public-safety officers, the purchase of instructional equipment, and the fostering of partnerships between our colleges and the business community. We recommend that Congress continue its strong support of this important program, both in annual appropriations and in reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Act. These investments in workforce training pay significant economic returns.

3. **AMEND Tax Code** – The federal government annually provides as much financial support through the tax code as it does through direct appropriations. Unfortunately, most of the support through the tax code especially benefits private universities with large endowments. This produces wide disparities in federal support for students depending on where they go to college. For example, in New Jersey total federal support per student is about \$100,000 at Princeton, \$10,000 at Rutgers, and \$1,000 at Essex County College. This needs to change. One place to start would be to enhance the **American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC)** for community college students. In particular, AOTC should be reformed to ensure that all community college Pell Grant recipients can also receive the tax credit.

4. **Other Community College Priorities:**

- Reauthorize the Higher Education Act – Oppose "risk sharing"
- Support DACA Students – Pass the BRIDGE Act
- Include Community Colleges in Infrastructure Spending

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