



North Orange County  
Community College District

Federal

2015-2016

FEDERAL

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The North Orange County Community College District has identified five critically important federal legislative priorities to focus advocacy efforts on for 2015-16. Each priority has been carefully chosen to focus on results that will favor the District's student population and long-term sustainability.

## 1. Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA)

The Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is important to the District as it governs federal financial aid programs, but with the anticipated changes, will likely include policy focused on accreditation, regulation reform, risk-sharing, and additional transparency. The HEA has been expired since 2013 and extended by Congress while debates over the reauthorization take place. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House Education & Workforce Committee have each held several hearings on reauthorizing HEA.

### Legislative Goal:

- *Ensure reauthorization of the Higher Education Act supports community colleges and the specific needs of the "nontraditional" student population.*

## 2. Federal Financial Aid

The President has put forth several proposals in his budget for FY 2017 to make college more affordable for students. The President's budget includes America's College Promise to make community college free for responsible students; reinstatement of year-round Pell Grant; increasing the Pell Grant by \$300 for students taking at least 15 credit hours; and modernizing and expanding the Perkins Loan program that would provide eight and half times the current Perkins Loan volume.

Congress is likely to begin debating the budget for FY 2017 in the coming weeks and many of these proposals may be brought up for consideration.

### Legislative Goals:

- *Support efforts to prioritize funding for Pell Grants and other need-based financial aid.*
- *Support reinstating eligibility for the year-round Pell Grant.*
- *Support policy that allows funding to provide for two years of free community college tuition for students.*

### 3. Risk Sharing Proposal

In the 114th Congress, Senators Shaheen and Hatch introduced S. 1939, the Student Protection and Success Act, legislation that would replace the current cohort default rate metric with a system that bases Title IV eligibility on cohort repayment rates. If an institution does not meet a set cohort repayment rate of 45 percent, then they could be fined one million dollars or more.

Risk sharing proposals, also known as “skin-in-the-game,” could result in either increased tuition or reduced educational services for students. At Community Colleges, a small decline in revenues from budget cuts or decreased enrollments can lead to immediate reductions in personnel and other core services. In addition, should risk-sharing proposals be adopted, Community Colleges may choose not to participate in the federal loan programs, which could limit access to financial aid for students and/or create a greater reliance on private borrowing.

Community colleges already have significant amount of “skin-in-the-game” in the form of state and local government funding. It should, therefore, be a priority for the federal government to better address over borrowing and high default rates before penalizing institutions such as community colleges that are already operating on the margins. Community Colleges do not determine who receives student loans and are not primarily responsible for the collection of loan repayments, making such a plan unrealistic in reducing students defaulting on their loans.

#### Legislative Goal:

- *Support efforts that assist in reducing student loan default and promote repayment, including new limits on borrowing, an institutional role in determining appropriate levels of debt, and new incentives to ensure that colleges are vigilant in helping students manage and repay their loans.*

### 4. Student Veterans

The District understands that student veterans face different challenges and barriers to accessing higher education and being successful in pursuing their educational goals. Benefits received by student veterans are administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. While there are some actions the District can take at the local and State levels, the District knows that the Federal government drives the process and procedures when it comes to student veterans accessing their benefits. There have been bills introduced in the past that have attempted to streamline and improve the VA’s benefit process, increase veterans access to community college districts by offering in-state tuition, and expanding services for veterans seeking assistance. It is important the District is aware of any federal movements on this issue so the District can fully support increasing student veteran’s access to benefits and reaching their higher education goals.

#### Legislative Goals:

- *Support existing federal programs and the creation of new programs that assist veterans with transitioning to higher education and completing the necessary coursework to achieve their educational goals.*
- *Support legislation that assists veterans with accessing higher education and their educational benefits.*

## 5. Campus Sexual Assault Legislation

In the 114th Congress, Senator McCaskill (D-MO) reintroduced bipartisan legislation, S. 590, Campus Accountability and Safety Act, to prevent sexual assault on campuses. The bill includes the following provisions:

- Establishes New Campus Resources and Support Services for Student Survivors: Colleges and universities will be required to designate Confidential Advisors to assist survivors of sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.
- Requires Fairness in Campus Disciplinary Process: All schools will now be required to use one uniform process for campus student disciplinary proceedings and may no longer allow athletic departments or other subgroups to handle complaints.
- Ensures Minimum Training Standards for On-Campus Personnel: This legislation ensures that everyone from the Confidential Advisors to those responsible for investigating and participating in disciplinary proceedings will receive specialized training so that they have a firm understanding of the nature of these crimes and their effect on survivors.
- Creates New Transparency Requirements: For the first time, students at every university in America will be surveyed about their experience with sexual violence. The Department of Education will also be required to publish the names of all schools with pending investigations, final resolutions, and voluntary resolution agreements related to Title IX with respect to sexual violence.
- Campus Accountability and Coordination with Law Enforcement: This legislation will require colleges and universities to enter into memoranda of understanding with each local law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction to report to a campus as a first responder to clearly delineate responsibilities and share information so that when a crime occurs, both campus authorities and local authorities can focus on solving the crime rather than debating jurisdiction.
- Enforceable Title IX Penalties and Stiffer Penalties for Clery Act Violations: Schools that do not comply with certain requirements under the bill may face a penalty of up to 1 percent of the institution's operating budget. The bill increases penalties for Clery Act violations to up to \$150,000 per violation from the current penalty of \$35,000.

### Legislative Goal:

- *Send a position letter to the District Congressional Representative that outlines requested changes that align with American Association of Community College's position.*
- *Ensure all requirements and mandates included in such legislation align with community colleges ability to comply and support the specifics of the community college student population.*



NORTH ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

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