



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



July 20, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of America's community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCT) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) write to express our strong support for H.R. 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009. H.R. 3221 supports the goals outlined by President Barack Obama in his American Graduation Initiative and provides historic funding for community college modernization and programs.

With unemployment rising, enrollments at community colleges across the country continue to spike. Many community colleges have seen double-digit increases in attendance, as students seek education opportunities and workforce training. The funds in H.R. 3221 will prove critical as community colleges work to meet the goals set out by President Obama and the legislation, and we expect that they will lead to lasting improvements in the ability of our colleges to serve students.

We applaud the Committee for crafting this legislation and would like to highlight some key provisions:

- **\$2.5 billion for Community College Modernization**

The funds for Community College Modernization will provide critical funding for community college renovation, repair and modernization. With the rapid rise in community college enrollments nationwide, federal funding is especially important in helping community colleges educate and train the workers of the 21st Century.

- **\$7 billion for the Community College Initiative**

The funding for the Community College Initiative will be the largest single federal program benefitting community colleges. This historic federal aid to community colleges and states will help community colleges strengthen academic programs, developmental education, job training programs, support services, articulation agreements and dual enrollment offerings.

- **Pell Grant Maximum Increase**

The Pell Grants program is the most essential higher education access program for low-income students. The program now serves 7 million students annually, the vast majority of whom come from families with very modest incomes who in many instances could not

otherwise afford to attend college. H.R. 3221 increases the maximum Pell Grant each year through 2019.

- **FAFSA Simplification**

H.R. 3221 streamlines the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For too long, the unnecessarily complex FAFSA has proved to be a barrier for access to federal student aid. The proposed changes will reduce the time needed to complete the form and allow more students to access aid.

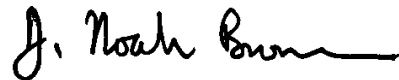
As the Committee moves to markup, we suggest two changes to the bill as introduced. First, under Section 503, limit institutional eligibility to those that meet the common understanding of community college, with a provision that exceptions may be made for institutions similar to community colleges in areas not otherwise served by a community college. Second, ensure that the bulk of funding is provided to campuses as part of the systematic reform of community colleges; we recommend that Section 504(f) include the following language, “States shall allocate no less than 90% of the grant provided to community colleges to achieve the purposes of this section.”

We would like to express our strong support to you for your stewardship of this vital bill. We look forward to working to ensure passage in Committee, on the House floor, and getting the bill signed into law.

Sincerely,



George R. Boggs
AACC CEO and President



J. Noah Brown
ACCT CEO and President