Federal Update

2013 Association of Community College Trustees’ National Legislative Summit

Members of the California Community College Board of Governors, Chancellor Brice Harris and over 75 California Community College leaders traveled to Washington, DC to attend the annual Association of Community College Trustees’ (ACCT) National Legislative Summit from February 11-14, 2013. There were over 1,000 community college trustees, presidents, students and other supporters from across the nation who joined together to advocate on behalf community colleges. The timing of this Summit could not have been more critical for our federal advocacy efforts, which include protecting Pell Grant funding, supporting community colleges to better serve Veterans, and advocating for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.

While in Washington, DC members of the Board of Governors, Chancellor Harris and California Community College advocates met with the Under Secretary of Education Dr. Martha Kanter, Senator Barbara Boxer, and several members of the House of Representatives. These meetings focused on three crucial federal priorities for the California Community Colleges:

1) **Funding for the Pell Grant Program** – To urge Congress to support a maximum Pell Grant award of $5,645 for fiscal year 2013-14 without further limiting student eligibility.
2) **Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)** – To urge Congress to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act, and support critically important WIA issues.
3) **Support our Community College Veterans** – To urge Congress to fund more counselors for veteran students, and fund the Centers for Excellence for Veteran Success in the Higher Education Act.

Sequestration

On March 1, 2013 sequestration is set to occur, which will entail an across-the-board reduction in federal spending through the budget process. Congress passed the Budget Control Act in August 2011, which was a bipartisan deal to raise the debt limit in exchange for a series of spending cuts. Under the deal, Congress was directed to pass a plan to reduce federal spending by $1.2 trillion, but if they failed to do that sequestration would take place.

If sequestration does occur, higher education will feel the impact in the areas research funding and student aid. Although the Pell Grant program is exempt from sequestration, other student aid programs will be reduced by approximately 5.1 percent. The federal student aid programs that would include the: Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work-

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Study Program, Federal TRIO Programs, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Combined, these programs would be cut approximately $146,000,000.

Both Senate leaders Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell say they will have alternative legislation to present when Congress reconvenes on February 25, four days before the cuts are set to kick in. At the moment, there are four different plans of varying size and length, that would delay or replace the sequester for a few months, or as long as a year.

**H.R. 357: GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013**
House Resolution 357, introduced by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL) would require courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education that are approved for purposes of the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to charge veterans tuition and fees at the in-state tuition rate, regardless of the veteran’s State of residence.

**H.R. 359: CAMPUS Safety Act of 2013**
This bill, introduced by Representative Robert Scott (D-VA) would establish and operate a National Center for Campus Public Safety. The Center would: (1) provide quality education and training for public safety personnel of institutions of higher education and their collaborative partners, including campus mental health agencies; (2) foster quality research to strengthen the safety and security of institutions of higher education; and (3) serve as a clearinghouse for the identification and dissemination of information, policies, protocols, procedures, and best practices relevant to campus public safety, including off-campus housing safety, the prevention of violence against persons and property, and emergency response and evacuation procedures.

**S. 3: Strengthen our Schools and Students Act**
Introduced on January 22, 2013 by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) Senate Bill 3, among other things, would build on recent efforts to continue to make higher education more affordable and to improve access and success for all students. It would also provide all teachers with the support they need to ensure student success, including the creation of a new national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Master Teacher Corps to recognize and help retain STEM teachers and strengthen STEM education in public schools in the United States.

**S. 216: Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act of 2013**
Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced Senate Bill 216 on February 4, 2013 which would prevent harassment at institutions of higher education. It would authorize the United States Secretary of Education to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to enable eligible entities to carry out authorized activities such as counseling or redress services to students who have suffered from harassment. The grants would go towards educating or training students, faculty, or staff of institutions of higher education about ways to prevent harassment or ways to address harassment if it occurs.