HOW CONGRESS CAN CLOSE EQUITY GAPS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Double Pell

The Pell Grant program is the cornerstone of federal financial aid for students from low-income backgrounds. This targeted need-based aid provides crucial support for nearly 7 million students annually. Unfortunately, its purchasing power has declined over time. At its peak in the 1970s, the maximum award could cover three-fourths of the average cost of attendance (tuition, fees, and living expenses) for a public four-year degree. Today, it covers one-third. NCAN applauds Congress for recent investments made to raise the maximum award but supports bolder increases that would ease prevalent college affordability challenges and improve equity gaps in attainment, including by allowing students who are undocumented to access Pell.

Better FAFSA Implementation

NCAN’s longstanding federal policy priority of simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process is becoming a reality. FSA is fully implementing the FAFSA Simplification Act and the FUTURE Act with the upcoming 2024-25 FAFSA. NCAN supports full funding of FSA to help facilitate an effective and efficient implementation of the Better FAFSA. The urgency for students to access federal financial aid has only grown since the passage of the legislation.

Food Security

Students who are worried about their next meal are not able to fully engage in their studies. Ensuring students’ reliable access to healthy sustenance and that their basic needs are met is a significant issue for college access and success. NCAN supports updating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) exemptions so that students most likely to experience food insecurity in fact receive benefits, and so that there’s a streamlined process for students, institutions, and SNAP agencies who verify and administer the benefit.

College Retention and Completion

The benefits of postsecondary attainment are profound, but more often accrue to students with greater advantage in life. Across the country, programs and strategies have been proven to help more first-generation students, students of color, and students from low-income families attain a degree. NCAN supports robust funding of the Postsecondary Student Success Grant program to develop, implement and scale evidence-based initiatives that improve nationwide rates of college retention/completion and the public’s return on investment in higher education.

About Us:

The National College Attainment Network (NCAN) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional association with nearly 600 member organizations across the U.S. that help students prepare for, apply to, and succeed in college. NCAN member organizations touch the lives of more than 2 million students each year and see firsthand the challenges that students face. With the right pre-college advising, financial aid, and mentoring, students who face historical and structural inequities can complete a degree or credential at higher rates. NCAN believes everyone — regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status — should have the opportunity to complete affordable, high-quality education after high school.

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