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**

In August 2011, as part of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), bipartisan majorities in both the House of Representatives and Senate voted for sequestration as a mechanism to compel the Congress to act on deficit reduction. The threat of destructive across-the-board cuts under the BCA was intended to drive both sides to compromise. A year and a half later, and Congress and the President failed to agree on a balanced deficit reduction legislation to avoid sequestration.

As a result of the Congress's failure to act, sequestration went into effect on Friday, March 1, 2013 forcing the President to issue a sequestration order canceling $85 billion in budgetary resources across the Federal government for the 2013 fiscal year. The Office of Management and Budget calculates that over the course of the fiscal year, which ends on September 30, the
sequestration requires a 7.8 percent reduction in non-exempt defense discretionary funding and a 5 percent reduction in non-exempt nondefense discretionary funding.

Higher education will feel the impact in the areas of 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 include: Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work-Study Program, Federal TRIO Programs, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Combined, these programs would be cut approximately $146 million. All programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs will be exempt from sequestration cuts.

While the Democrats and Republicans continue to battle over these budget cuts, the parties did agree to not allow the sequester to get in the way of negotiations to continue full funding for the federal government. These funds will run out on March 27.

**Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act Hearing**

On February 26, 2013, the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training held a hearing on the urgent need to strengthen the federal workforce development system. Members discussed a number of legislative proposals intended to address flaws in federal job training policies, including the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act.

Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) stated at the hearing “today’s workforce development system is failing workers, employers, and taxpayers. Instead of a dynamic network of employment support, we have a massive bureaucracy that stifles innovation and wastes resources. The need to fundamentally change the status quo has never been greater. President Obama said last year that it was ‘time to turn our unemployment system into a reemployment system.’ That is precisely what the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act will do.”

The SKILLS Act (H.R. 803) reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act, which has not been reauthorized since 2003. State and local workforce development leaders described the need to reauthorize federal law and discussed the positive reforms reflected in the legislation.

**H.R. 357: GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013**

House Resolution 357, bipartisan legislation introduced by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL), Chairman of the House Veterans Committee, and ranking member Representative Mike Michaud (D-ME), would require schools eligible for GI Bill education benefits to give veterans in-state tuition rates even though they may not be residents of the states where the schools are located.

**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.

**H.R. 803: Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act**  
On February 25, 2013 Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC) introduced this bill to reform and strengthen the workforce investment system of the Nation to put Americans back to work and make the United States more competitive in the 21st century. The SKILLS Act, among many things, would facilitate greater collaboration with community colleges by allowing states to determine the standards required for eligible training providers and allows local boards to contract with community colleges directly to provide training to large groups of participants instead of on an individual basis.

**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 the authorized activities such as counseling or redress services to students who have suffered from harassment or students who have been accused of subjecting other students to such harassment; or to educate or train students, faculty, or staff of institutions of higher education about ways to prevent harassment or ways to address such harassment if it occurs.