



# National College Access Network

*Building Connections. Advancing Equity. Promoting Success.*

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#### **Executive Director**

**Kim Cook**

April 25, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
U. S. House of Representatives  
2358B Rayburn House Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
And Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
U. S. House of Representatives  
2358B Rayburn House Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
156 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Cole and Blunt and Ranking Members DeLauro and Murray,

Thank you for your strong leadership during the 2018 fiscal year appropriations discussions that secured significant investments in college affordability for low-income students in our country. As our mission states, the National College Access Network and its members are focused on helping historically underrepresented students achieve their educational dreams through any high-quality pathway of postsecondary education. The priorities shown through the fiscal year 2018 funding decisions will help students pursue these educational dreams. Today, we write to respectfully request a continued commitment to low-income students through additional investment in financial aid and related programs.

The National College Access Network, founded in 1995, represents more than 400 members across the country that all work toward NCAN's mission to build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success so that all students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education, can achieve their educational dreams. NCAN's members span a broad range of the education, nonprofit, government, and civic sectors, including national and



community-based nonprofit organizations, federally funded TRIO and GEAR UP programs, school districts, colleges and universities, foundations, and corporations. All are dedicated to helping underrepresented students access, afford, and succeed in higher education. The federal investments that would most bolster this goal in fiscal year 2019 include the following:

**Pell Grant Investments:**

The Pell Grant award is the cornerstone of financial aid for low-income students. Without this need-based grant funding, an even smaller portion of low-income students would be able to access higher education. Congress recognized this importance in the fiscal year 2018 budget by increasing the maximum Pell Grant award by \$175, or 3 percent. This increase is crucial as automatic inflationary adjustments previously required by the Higher Education Act expire. Even with this increase, the purchasing power of the Pell Grant for a four-year college degree drops to an historic low of 28 percent.

Due to this loss of purchasing power, NCAN asks for consideration of a bold, multi-year proposal to address the long-term purchasing power of the Pell Grant. At its peak in 1975-76, the maximum Pell Grant award covered nearly four-fifths of a public four-year college education. NCAN realizes the fiscal challenges that face Congress and therefore recommends a multi-year interim step that would return Pell’s purchasing power to 50 percent of the cost of a four-year public higher education. *In order to reach that goal, as outlined below, NCAN respectfully requests a maximum Pell Grant of \$6,831.*

Academic Year	Public Four-Year Cost of Attendance	One-Year Percent Change	Pell Maximum Award	Percentage of CoA Covered by Pell Maximum	One Year Percent Change in Pell Maximum Award
08-09	\$14,370	—	\$4,731	33%	—
09-10	\$15,240	6.1%	\$5,350	35%	13.1%
10-11	\$16,180	6.2%	\$5,550	34%	3.7%
11-12	\$17,160	6.1%	\$5,550	32%	0.0%
12-13	\$17,820	3.8%	\$5,550	31%	0.0%
13-14	\$18,380	3.1%	\$5,645	31%	1.7%
14-15	\$18,930	3.0%	\$5,730	30%	1.5%
15-16	\$19,570	3.4%	\$5,775	30%	0.8%
16-17	\$20,150	3.0%	\$5,815	29%	0.7%
17-18	\$20,770	3.1%	\$5,920	29%	1.8%
18-19	\$21,393	3.0%	\$6,095	28%	3.0%

19-20	\$22,035	3.0%	\$6,831	31%	12.1%
20-21	\$22,696	3.0%	\$7,717	34%	13.0%
21-22	\$23,377	3.0%	\$8,649	37%	12.1%
22-23	\$24,078	3.0%	\$9,390	39%	8.6%
23-24	\$24,800	3.0%	\$10,168	41%	8.3%
24-25	\$25,544	3.0%	\$10,984	43%	8.0%
25-26	\$26,311	3.0%	\$11,840	45%	7.8%
26-27	\$27,100	3.0%	\$12,737	47%	7.6%
27-28	\$27,913	3.0%	\$13,957	50%	9.6%

If the initial installment of this multi-year approach is not fiscally possible, then we recommend that Congress continue to ensure an inflationary adjustment (estimated at 2 percent) to Pell and increase the maximum award to \$6,217 in the FY 2019 appropriations bill.

#### **Campus-Based Aid:**

As low-income students are piecing together the resources to support their postsecondary pursuits, every dollar and every type of aid counts. For most low-income students, the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) and Federal Work-Study help to fill important holes in their financial aid packages.

The [average SEOG award](#) for dependent students was \$752 in 2017. For the 2018 fiscal year, Congress generously increased the SEOG budget by 14.6 percent, bringing it to \$840,000,000. This increase will allow institutions to offer SEOG awards to more students to or provide additional dollars, up to \$4000, to students who need it most. *For fiscal year 2019, NCAN respectfully requests that Congress once again increase the SEOG program budget by 14.6 percent, for a total of \$963,000,000.*

[Fifty-eight percent](#) of today's students work while enrolled in higher education. The Federal Work-Study (FWS) program allows students to work in a flexible environment, learn important skills, and minimize the amount of time they spend travelling between work and campus. For the 2018 fiscal year, Congress provided a FWS investment of \$1.13 billion, an increase of 14.1 percent. *For fiscal year 2019, NCAN respectfully requests that Congress once again increase the FWS program budget by 14.1 percent, for a total of \$1.29 billion.*

Additionally, campus-based aid programs encourage institutions to increase their investment in need-based financial aid as both of these programs require a match. The larger federal investment also means institu-



tions will be increasing their investment, bringing more funds to students overall.

**Federally Funded College Access Programs – TRIO and GEAR UP:**

With approximately [1.8 million high school seniors](#) defined as low-income annually, many programs are needed to meet all of their needs as they pursue their options after high school graduation. The NCAN community serves approximately 2 million students annually across ages – from middle school through college graduation. To reach all of the students needing services nationwide, our members build important partnerships both with TRIO and GEAR UP programs. *NCAN respectfully requests that Congress continue its investment in federally funded college access programs at the amounts requested by their communities: \$1,070,000 for TRIO and \$375 million for GEAR UP.*

**Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS):**

For every dollar spent on national service, the country sees a [return on investment](#) that is almost fourfold. Service also plays an important role in the college access movement. In particular, many of NCAN's largest members are able to maximize their impact on underrepresented students by participating in the AmeriCorps public-private partnership. Continuing support for CNCS, and in particular the AmeriCorps program, will enable additional volunteers to work with low-income students, students of color, and students who are first in their family to attend college. *NCAN respectfully echoes the request of the Voices for National Service to increase funding to provide for 100,000 volunteers during the fiscal year 2019.*

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our funding priorities for the fiscal year 2019. High-income students are two times more likely to complete a postsecondary degree or credential than low-income students. Through continued supports – both financial and programmatic – our country can work together to close this attainment gap. Thank you again for your support of this important goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Cook  
Executive Director