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SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPPOSES POTENTIAL REDUCTIONS IN FEDERAL FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY FOR PELL GRANTS

Selden, NY – On August 16, 2012, Suffolk County Community College’s Board of Trustees adopted a resolution urging the United States Congress to reject the House Budget Committee’s proposal to cut funding and eligibility for Pell grants in fiscal year 2013.

The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants primarily to low-income undergraduate students to promote access to postsecondary education. Grant amounts are dependent on a student's expected family contribution; the cost of attendance; the student's enrollment status (full-time or part-time); and whether the student attends for a full academic year or less. Pell grants help more than 9 million Americans attend and complete college. In the past 2011-2012 academic year, almost 9,000 Suffolk County Community College students relied on Pell Grants to pursue their studies. The program recently sustained significant reductions that eliminate “year-round” Pell grants and reduce the lifetime Pell grant eligibility from 18 to 12 semesters. These changes have affected students who depend upon Pell grants to enroll in summer classes or need to attend college over an extended period of time to achieve their educational goals.

Congress is now considering even deeper cuts that could serve to create additional obstacles to higher education, including:

- A proposal to eliminate all mandatory funding for Pell grants;
- An unspecified maximum cap, above which students would no longer be eligible for Pell grants;
- A drastic reduction in the Income Protection Allowance (IPA), which is the amount of income a student or family can keep to cover minimal living expenses before being expected to contribute toward college costs;
- A reduction in Pell grant eligibility for students who attend college on a less-than-half-time schedule;
- A move to disallow living expenses to be considered when determining Pell grant eligibility for students enrolled entirely in online courses.

“As a community college, we are especially mindful of how essential it is to provide residents with access to affordable higher education,” said Dr. Shaun L. McKay, president of Suffolk County Community College. “We hope that our elected officials fully understand how these cuts may complicate efforts to educate more students.”

Dafny Irizarry, chairwoman of the Suffolk County Community College Board of Trustees added, “Clearly, many of Suffolk’s students are extremely dependent upon Pell grants and we strongly encourage our Congressional leaders to reject these new proposals.”

Unlike loans, Pell grants do not have to be repaid. In 2011-2012, more than 65% of students at Suffolk County Community College were dependent upon some type of financial aid. More information about Pell grants can be found at the U.S. Department of Education website at www.ed.gov.

About Suffolk County Community College

Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) is the largest community college in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, enrolling approximately 26,000 students at its three campuses in Selden, Brentwood and Riverhead. SCCC offers the Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), and Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees, as well as a variety of certificate programs. Offering affordable college tuition, a highly respected Honors program, extensive extracurricular activities, championship athletic teams, and numerous unified transfer programs, SCCC is a first-choice college for Long Island students. For more information about the College and its president, please visit us at www.sunysuffolk.edu/About/PresidentsOffice.asp.

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