

Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act

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Background: When it comes to higher education, federal policies are not doing enough to support the demands of the changing labor market. Many of the individuals who enter into skills and job training programs are at the lowest end of the socioeconomic level. Yet, simply because their goal is to enter the workforce rather than obtain a degree, they are denied access to federal financial aid. The Federal Pell Grant Program—needs-based grants for low-income and working students— can only be used to offset the cost of programs that are over 600 clock hours or at least 15 weeks in length. While many short-term programs provide high-quality skills training that employers need and recognize, they are not Pell-eligible.

Since the creation of the Pell Grant, the profile of today's students has evolved along with the types of postsecondary education and training programs students look to enroll in. [Today](#), 37% of all postsecondary students are 25 years of age or older, 64% work full-or-part-time while attending school and 24% have children or dependents. While many of these students enroll in longer-term degree programs, a significant number seek out shorter-term, workforce-oriented training programs that lead to in-demand jobs or stack to longer-term education pathways. These short-term programs allow them to advance their education and skills in a manner that works with their life-situation of working and caring for children and other dependents. Without such programs, many of these students cannot devote the four plus years that many part-time students must spend to get an associates degree, or 6 plus years to earn a four year degree.

The JOBS Act would amend the *Higher Education Act* by:

- Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in rigorous and high-quality short-term skills and job training programs that lead to industry-based credentials and ultimately employment in high-wage, high-skill industry sectors or careers
- Ensuring that students who receive Pell Grants are earning high-quality postsecondary credentials by requiring that credentials:
 - Meet the standards under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) such as meaningful career counseling and aligning programs to in-demand career pathways or registered apprenticeship programs and are on the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)
 - Align with the *Perkins Career and Technical Education Act's* program of study definition
 - Are recognized by employers, industry, or sector partnerships
 - Align with the skill needs of industries in the state or local economy
 - Are evaluated by an accrediting agency and approved by the state workforce board in addition to the U.S. Department of Education
- Defining eligible job training programs as those providing career and technical education instruction at a public institution of higher education such as a community or technical college that provides:
 - At least 150 clock hours of instruction time over a period of at least 8 weeks
 - Training that meets the needs of the local or regional workforce and industry partnerships
 - Institutional credit articulation so students can continue to pursue further education in their careers
 - Students with licenses, certification, or credentials that meet the hiring requirements of multiple employers on the field for which the job training is offered
- Creating an inter-agency data sharing agreement between the Department of Labor and Department of Education to share WIOA performance outcomes metrics such as median earnings and completion