

WATCH LIST | FOCUS ON EDUCATION

JULY 2019

1 OVERVIEW: Pell Grant Eligibility

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 7.3 million U.S. jobs are vacant in part due to a shortage of qualified workers. In South Florida, there are several good-paying job categories (aviation, IT, accounting) with shortages which can be filled quickly through short-term training programs offered at South Florida colleges and universities. Yet, the cost of these programs remains a barrier for many low-income students eager to increase their skills and earning potential.

Pell Grants, need-based grants for low-income and working students, can only be applied toward programs that require at least 600 hours of coursework. Lowering the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility will enable more individuals to access training programs for jobs in high-need fields such as avionics, aviation mechanics, power plant mechanics, and law enforcement officers.

While expansion would add to program costs, the maximum expenditure would be capped up front. At current funding levels, the program would add less than \$600 million annually to the overall cost even if every institution now enrolling Pell Grant recipients used all newly available funds, which is highly unlikely.

Therefore, the South Florida Business Council (SFBC) supports the Senate's bipartisan Jumpstart Our Business by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act, which is sponsored by Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Senator Rob Portman (R-OH)*, calling for Pell Grant eligibility for short-term programs.

*The JOBS Act is cosponsored by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). The JOBS Act is endorsed by the National Skills Coalition (NSC), the Association of Community Colleges and Trustees (ACCT), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), IBM, Opportunity America, Jobs for the Future, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), Advance CTE, and Young Invincibles.

2 IMPACT

Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to cover high-quality and rigorous short-term job training programs would allow more students to afford the training and credentials that are in high demand in today's job market, allowing businesses to accelerate growth.

"Short-term programs are an important and growing component of our offerings for evolving workforce needs. Short-term programs respond to the immediate needs of employers and create new career ladders that foster upward mobility for South Florida residents."

- **Gregory Adam Haile, Esq.**, President of Broward College

"At FIU, we are focused on supporting our students and helping them find jobs. We are working with industry partners to create innovative programs that help our students succeed in a rapidly evolving workforce. More than half of all undergraduate FIU students receive Pell Grants, which makes the program a critical part of our learners' success."

- **Mark B. Rosenberg**, President of Florida International University

"Providing Pell Grant support to low-income students can catapult them into a new quality of life. Not only have Pell Grants been proven to increase retention and completion, data also shows students who earned short-term credentials through community colleges have seen increased employment opportunities and wage increases of 20 percent or more."

- **Ava L. Parker, J.D.**, President of Palm Beach State College

"We've worked closely with the colleges and universities to attack the workforce shortages and have seen the benefit when business and educational leaders work together."

- **Juliet Murphy Roulhac, Esq.**, Director – External Affairs, Florida Power & Light Co.

"Having access to a skilled workforce is a key factor in whether businesses choose to expand or even relocate to South Florida. There's a clear economic impact to investing in Pell Grant expansion."

- **Tony Argiz**, Chairman & CEO – MBAF



CURRENTLY SOUTH FLORIDA RECEIVES \$732,038,802 ANNUALLY IN PELL GRANT FUNDING.

South Florida Schools That Accept Pell Grants

State Universities

- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida International University

State Colleges

- Broward College
- Miami Dade College
- Palm Beach State College

Private/Non-Profit Institutions

- Nova Southeastern University
- Palm Beach Atlantic University
- St. Thomas University
- University of Miami

Sample Jobs That Students Could Secure With Pell Grant Expansion

Jobs	Median Hourly Earnings
FAA Aircraft General Mechanic	\$24.80
Network Systems Support Specialist	\$24.17
Computer Support Specialist	\$22.09
Motion Picture Production	\$18.76
Accounting Technology Specialist	\$16.89
Graphic Design	\$16.49
Marine Electrician	\$14.36

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ACTION

The SFBC is advocating for the passage of the Senate’s bipartisan JOBS Act. We will be representing South Florida in Washington, D.C. this fall. We encourage business leaders to let their legislators know this bill will make a difference. Go to commoncause.org/find-your-representative.

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ABOUT SFBC

The SFBC is a partnership between the Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. Its mission is to assist with South Florida’s regional issues and use its resources to create solutions. The Chambers expect to use the power that comes from speaking with one voice to drive South Florida forward and make it a better place to live, work, and enjoy. To learn more, visit soflobusinesscouncil.com.

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