



Guiding the way to higher education



PACIFIC NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION
FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING

April 5, 2011

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Rehberg,

On behalf of the National Association for College Admission Counseling ([NACAC](#)) and the Pacific Northwest Association for College Admission Counseling (a regional affiliate of NACAC), collectively representing more than 11,000 high school counselors and college admission officers, we write to express our concern about your recent comments about the Pell Grant program and its recipients.

The Federal Pell Grant program is the foundation of need-based financial aid and is the most successful college access program, creating educational opportunities for America's neediest and ambitious students. Low-income students eligible for a Pell Grant have demonstrated a commitment to increasing their contributions to our society and economy by overcoming significant barriers to enroll in postsecondary education.

Education is the key driver of economic productivity in your state and our country. College graduates typically pay 134 percent more in federal income taxes and 80%, or \$5,900, more in total federal, state, and local taxes than the typical high school graduate (College Board, 2007; 2010), which makes the Pell Grant an investment in our nation's economic prosperity.

According to a [2002 report](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Pell Grant recipients are no less likely to succeed in college than comparable students who do not receive Pell Grants. Moreover, the receipt of a Pell Grant was actually associated with a *shorter* time to degree in a [2009 NCES study](#). As you know, part of the Pell Grant's purpose and its effectiveness as a catalyst for educational and economic growth is its ability to help students overcome financial barriers to college access. In the current 2010-11 academic year, [19,881 Pell Grants](#) were awarded to Montana students (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2010). Without the Pell Grant, most of these students would not even have the opportunity to enter higher education.

We urge you to consider the important contributions Pell Grant recipients make to your state and national economies when considering program funding.

Sincerely,

Jim Miller, President
NACAC

Alicia Ortega, President
Pacific Northwest ACAC