State of the Union Address

During President Obama's annual State of the Union address on January 28, President Obama called for expanded access to apprenticeships and improved job training programs at community colleges. The State of the Union Fact Sheet: Opportunity for All and White House SOTU site.

In line with the overarching economic themes of his speech, President Obama spoke about different aspects of his higher education agenda mentioning the College Summit, cuts to basic research, immigration reform and the proposed college rating system.

Dr. Jill Biden and Vice President Joe Biden visit Monroe Community College

On January 29th, appearing at Monroe Community College’s Applied Technologies Center, Dr. Jill Biden and Vice President Joe Biden called the SUNY community college a national model for college workforce training. The visit comes after President Obama committed to helping community colleges build industry partnerships, so that as workforce and skills needs change, community colleges can quickly adapt and increase the employability of their students.

President Obama has tasked the Vice President to “lead an across-the-board reform of America’s training programs” announcing a government wide review, to develop an action plan to make the job-training system more job-driven, integrated, and effective. As part of the emphasis on workforce training, the White House also announced the final round of a $500-million federal community college program will focus on job-driven training.

FY2015 Budget/Appropriations

The FY2015 process is set to start fairly soon. The White House has confirmed that it will release the President’s FY2015 budget on Tuesday, March 4.

As part of The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, the FY2015 top line number is $492.3B for non defense discretionary spending virtually the same as the FY2014 number (net increase of $583M). Several programs will need additional funding in FY2015, including VA health care (around $1.2B), Census Bureau ($400-500M) and Pell grants (due to projected shortfall). It could be difficult to obtain net increases above FY2014 programs, or even maintain level funding for all other programs.

Given the budget agreement has already set the discretionary spending cap for FY2015—Congressional leaders could choose to avoid consideration of a budget resolution and go straight to the appropriations process. The House Budget Committee is expected to produce a budget outline this year, but it remains unclear if Senate Committee will do the same. There is also possibility that Appropriations Chairs Rogers
and Mikulski might try and reach agreements on the process on the 302(b) allocations or spending levels for the 12 annual appropriations bills in the near future.

**President Obama’s College Value and Affordability and College Rating System**

On behalf of the SUNY Board of Trustees and Chancellor Zimpher, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor Elizabeth Bringsjord, [submitted a letter](#) in response to the Education Department’s request for information (RFI) on its proposal to create a postsecondary institutional rating system [attached](#).

The National Center for Education Statistics will hold a public symposium on the proposed system; February 6 from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. For those interested a [webcast](#) will be available (Password: pirstech1, Event Number: 742 484 116).