

PELL GRANTS & SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS:

Unlocking Careers and Educational Opportunities



WHAT ARE SHORT-TERM POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS?

Short-term postsecondary education programs are for-credit and non-credit occupational education programs offered by postsecondary institutions like community colleges, technical colleges and area technical centers that quickly lead students to certificates, licenses and industry certifications. These credentials are in demand and can lead to high-skill, high-wage careers. Since 2010, the number of certificates awarded by public colleges has increased by nearly 30% and one-quarter of the workforce has a non-credit certificate, license or other technical award.¹

LIMITATIONS OF PELL GRANTS

Although the prevalence of short-term education programs leading to in-demand credentials is growing, Title IV of the Higher Education Act limits Pell grant eligibility to postsecondary programs that are at least 600 hours of instruction over 15 weeks. This excludes students enrolled in some programs leading to valuable credentials from receiving federal aid.

EXPANDING PELL GRANT ACCESS

Expanding Pell grants to support the costs of high-quality, short-term education programs will help more Americans earn credentials and enter the workforce – or begin new careers – in high-wage, high-demand industries like manufacturing, health care and transportation. Moreover, short-term Pell grants put opportunity within reach for countless adult jobseekers, empowering them to pursue a postsecondary credential.

¹ Laitinen, A., Oistelu, M. O., & McCann, C. (2021, May 5). *The short-term credentials landscape*. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/the-short-term-credentials-landscape/>

² Baum, S., Holzer, H., Luetmer, G. (2020, December). *Should the federal government fund short-term postsecondary certificate programs?* Retrieved from https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103370/should-the-federal-government-fund-short-term-postsecondary-certificate-programs_0_0.pdf

³ Thomas, J., Gonzalez, N., Paxton, N., Wiegand, A., & Heber, L. (2020, December). *The effects of expanding Pell grant eligibility for short occupational training programs: Results from the experimental sites initiative*. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2021001/pdf/2021001.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, September 8). *Occupational projections and worker characteristics*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/occupational-projections-and-characteristics.htm>

⁵ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2017). *Snapshot report: Certificate and associate degree pathways*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SnapshotReport29.pdf>

⁶ FastForward. (2019). *Impact Report: 2016-2018*. Retrieved from <http://www.fastforwardva.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FastForward-Impact-Report.pdf>

⁷ Iowa Department of Education. (2021, July). *Gap tuition assistance program: Student outcomes*. Retrieved from <https://educatiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/Gap%20Outcomes%20Longitudinal%20Report%202015-2019.pdf>

WAGE GAINS

Certificate holders earn **10%** more than high school graduates

and **20%** more than GED graduates.²



HIGHER ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION RATES

Short-term Pell grants increase short-term postsecondary program enrollment rates by

15 PERCENTAGE POINTS and completion rates by **MORE THAN 9 PERCENTAGE POINTS.**³



WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES

Short-term credentials help people access career opportunities in

HIGH-DEMAND

fields such as information technology, welding, manufacturing, nursing and industrial maintenance.⁴



CONTINUING EDUCATION

About **63%** of certificate holders with no prior postsecondary education pursue additional coursework



and **27%** earn an associate degree, bachelor's degree or both.⁵

Short-term Pell Grants in Action

Virginia's New Economy Workforce Credentials Grant covers two-thirds of tuition for non-credit short-term credential programs in high-demand occupations at a Virginia community college. The program has a **92%** completion rate and, on average, graduates increase their take-home pay between **25%** and **50%**.⁶

Iowa's Gap Tuition Assistance Program provides up to 100% of tuition for eligible students enrolled in certificate training programs at Iowa's community colleges. On average, completers experience a **41%** quarterly wage gain and **24%** of graduates pursue additional education in credit-bearing programs.⁷