

## *Sample Letters to the Editor*

### Background

All colleges need to find ways to increase discussion of their student success agendas. Inviting the engaged public into the challenges and opportunities facing your college is critical to increasing policy support for your institutions. The following letters to the editor (LTE) are meant to serve as examples of how you can tap into larger conversations going on and use the broader issues as a jumping off point to highlight your leadership. These samples use economic growth and workforce skills as areas of interest for community colleges. Colleges should follow their state, regional and local media for coverage of these issues as well as education reform, labor trends, family/living wage, unemployment, corporate expansion, manufacturing, and many others.

An ideal LTE is very brief, less than 250 words, and responds to coverage in that outlet. It can be either supportive or critical of the coverage, but it must add something to the conversation to be considered newsworthy. While a small segment of news consumers read LTEs, they are read and followed by policy makers and influencers. Together with columns, editorials and op-eds, LTEs are considered thought leader media opportunities.

The first letter is in response to an [article](#) on how redistributive policies might boost economic growth. The second letter is in response to an [article](#) on how the American workforce lacks the skills needed by today's employers, contributing to the nation's high unemployment rate.

### Sample One

Improving access to college for low-income families is certainly a policy option that people on both sides of the aisle can get behind. But I would like to see more policymakers acknowledge the role community college plays in helping low-income students achieve a family-supporting job. Community colleges are the institutions of the American Dream. Today, community colleges provide an affordable education to almost half of all the undergraduate students in the United States, particularly those who have not been well served by their prior education. Led by AACCC, community college leaders across the country have committed to implementing a set of strategies that will better serve the 13 million diverse students in search of economic mobility. But we can't do it alone. Policy is a critical tool for setting public priorities and strategically

targeting public investments. Policymakers should recognize the Voluntary Framework of Accountability as a set of accepted metrics for community college performance, expand funding for Pell Grants, and invest in data systems that can be used to track students' progress. We know that a community college education offers both students and society a high ROI; standing behind community colleges is just good policy.

#### Sample Two

Today's rates of unemployment indeed remain "stubbornly high," and while government plays a critical role in filling the American workplace skills gap, this needs to be a collaborative national effort by all institutions, public and private. The trend towards more education, credentials and degrees is unmistakable. By 2018, nearly two thirds of all American jobs will require a postsecondary certificate or degree, and that means adding 15-20 million educated employees to the workforce by 2025. With this in mind, community college leaders across the country, led by AACC, have committed to implementing a set of strategies to increase college completion rates by 50% by 2020. We are identifying unfilled labor needs, ensuring that career education and training programs are targeted to address those needs, and building local, regional and national partnerships to match education with jobs. Community colleges are already taking vital steps to provide the American workforce with the necessary training to fill available jobs, and public and private institutions should invest in and support our efforts to strengthen the nation's workforce and build a healthier U.S. economy.