



Statement on Proposed Credit Requirements for Federal Pell Grant Eligibility

April 29, 2025

Complete College America (CCA) has long advocated for 15 to Finish/Stay on Track as an effective advising strategy that promotes on-time completion by encouraging full-time students to enroll in 15 credits per semester, which equates to 30 credits per year, and part-time students to maintain momentum toward their degree. The 15 to Finish/Stay on Track strategy has been proven to increase on-time graduation, reduce overall costs for students, and accelerate graduates' entry into the workforce. However, this strategy is most effective when it includes a comprehensive communications campaign, structural solutions, and recognition of individual student situations.

CCA firmly opposes any legislative attempts to tie Federal Pell Grant eligibility to a 30-credit-per-year minimum requirement instead of the current 12-credit-per-semester standard. The House Education and Workforce Committee's reconciliation legislation, which proposes a change to Pell eligibility, fundamentally misunderstands the intent of 15 to Finish/Stay on Track and would disproportionately harm the very students higher education should be empowering.

At CCA, we believe higher education is an engine of opportunity, prosperity, and hope. Limiting Pell eligibility based on credit hours would close those doors to opportunity for many students balancing significant personal and/or professional responsibilities. Redefining full-time as 30 credits or more per year would eliminate some or all Pell Grant funding for students who have mapped out an achievable path to a degree or credential that keeps them on track but happen to not fit within the strict 15-credit-hour-per-semester model.

A significant number of students will be affected by the new requirements, with many experiencing negative consequences. Based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse and the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 1.1 million students taking 12-14 credit hours per semester would be impacted by this legislation and at risk of losing some or all Pell Grant funding.

Along with 15 to Finish/Stay on Track, CCA advocates for evidence-based completion strategies that increase momentum toward a degree or credential, including summer enrollment, credit for prior learning, and dual enrollment. These policies may not align with the proposed 30-credit-per-year requirement, further excluding students for whom the Federal Pell Grant was designed to help.

By focusing on policies that maintain accessible financial aid, support flexible structures, and validate different pathways to success for students, we can build a higher education system that truly delivers on its promise for all Americans.