

Regional College Hunger Conference – Policy Plenary

SNAP Eligibility Changes

- 1. If a student qualifies for federal work study, do they also have the 20hr work requirements?**

Yes, but you should be able to work through your higher ed institution to verify that your work study will qualify for the VA, MD or DC paperwork or self-certification required to meet the SNAP work requirement.

- 2. Regarding SNAP and Medicare eligibility changes, what can institutions do to make this information more accessible, and eligibility more accessible?**

Institutions are free to share information with any student about the opportunity to apply for programs like SNAP or Medicaid. Your Student Services, or similarly missional office, can inform any student of the availability of programs for which they may qualify.

- 3. Do you believe legislators are open to discussing a reduction of the SNAP 20-hour work requirement for college students?**

If it becomes clear through the implementation of the new work requirement that it's difficult to administer or overly punitive to students, legislators could be open to modifications. We often find that personal stories and examples of hardship go a long way to challenging preconceived notions and can help make the case for reevaluating existing law.

Changes to laws regarding SNAP are rare, but it is imperative to share stories about the consequences of these changes. Even if change is slow, please regularly communicate the effects with legislators.

SNAP Navigation

- 4. How can our institutions best identify the numbers of our students who are SNAP beneficiaries, and how many are likely to be negatively impacted by these changes?**

You could pull Student Aid/Pell Grant information for your institution, but the better way to deal with it may be to make known widely to your student body that changes are coming and they may need to be aware of them to ensure compliance or not lose the benefit owed to them. That also would serve to ensure that they were treated with the greatest amount of care and respect.

5. Do you have best practices from institutions that are successful in helping students navigate SNAP? How can we support our students in accessing these benefits?

- a. Send out information about how to qualify and apply for SNAP with financial aid information
- b. Partner with an organization that does SNAP outreach to help students see if they are eligible
- c. Have SNAP applications available at the student pantry
- d. Have someone in student services or financial aid trained in the SNAP application and able to help students if necessary
- e. Destigmatize students on SNAP by talking about it often: at orientation, at student services, RAs, etc

This may be best handled by a peer institution transfer of information. Re: letting people know about accessing benefits, see above.

Grad & International Students

6. What advice and warnings should we give graduate/international students regarding representation to help them watch out for potential issues?

For graduate/professional and international graduate/professional students, the “One Big Beautiful Bill” Act (OBBB) terminates Grad PLUs loans and imposes new loan limits as of July 1, 2026, so they will need to be aware of those changes. It would be important to consult relevant campus administrative officials for advice and guidance about how to navigate those changes. Here is a [link](#) to ACE’s Division of Government Relations and National Engagement summary of the major education related policy changes in OBBB where you can find an overview of the changes. (See p. 2 of the summary).

7. Could you please elaborate on how the bill will affect international students?

There are no major changes in the OBBB specific to international students. OBBB does have a provision that essentially reiterates long standing federal financial aid system policy that non-citizens are ineligible for federal student aid.

8. When do the international student visa restrictions start?

On August 28, the Department of Homeland Security published a proposed regulation impacting F-1 and J-1 visa holders. Under the draft rule, F-1 and J-1 visa holders would face a four-year admission limit instead of the current policy of being admitted for the length of their academic program. Students who need more time would have to apply for an extension of status, granted only at the discretion of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in narrowly defined circumstances such as compelling academic reasons, documented medical conditions, or extraordinary events like natural disasters or institutional closures. The rule also includes other restrictive provisions: capping English language training programs at 24 months, prohibiting transfers or program changes during the first year, and limiting graduate students' ability to change programs. For more information about the proposed rule, see this [webpage](#) from NFASA: Association of International Educators. Keep in mind that this is just a proposed rule, so we don't know what the final rule will look like, and it will likely be many months before it is released with implementation deadlines. So it would be important for international students to seek advice from their international student's office on their campus.

9. Within the next few months or even the next academic year, what hardships do you see as the greatest issues for Grad/International students?

Since many of the major student loan changes from OBBB do not go into effect until July 1, 2026, the changes enacted in the bill will likely only be impactful beginning in the 2026-27 academic year. But for international students, they should keep track through their international student's office changes from Trump Administration related to student visas. There may be changes that could impact the ability of international students to travel out of the United States during their academic program so they should always check with their international student's office before making any such travel arrangements.

10. What measures are being taken to ensure security for international students interested in research?

International graduate students engaged in or interested in research should consult with faculty or administrative staff in their academic program and their international student's office for information and advice.

Opinion/Advice

11. What do you think is the responsibility of the University? Should they be focusing on these policy gaps or strengthening community resource relationships?

The breadth and diversity of public and private non-profit institutions from community colleges to research universities makes it difficult to provide one answer applicable to all institutions. Each institution with their academic mission and their specific student population should evaluate when and how, if at all, to engage on policy issues or how to strengthen community resource relationships.

12. What is the best way for students to inform school staff or faculty if they know a student is facing food insecurity?

The best practices for students would depend on their respective campuses. We recommend reaching out to your campus office that provides student support resources and services on their exact procedures.

Advocacy

13. Do you have advice for advocating for measures to combat/compensate for the changes at the state level?

Each of us has a First Amendment Right to advocate with federal, state and local government about matters of our concern. If you feel comfortable and safe – particularly for international students – engaging in advocacy, you should exercise your right to be heard as your voices are incredibly important in making government officials aware of the potential impact of their policy choices.

The power of advocacy comes in numbers, look to other campuses about forming coalitions. For example, student government members from different schools could join together to advocate for changes.

There are also groups around your states already working on these issues who would love to include the voices of students and schools. See who is speaking out on these issues in your state and reach out asking how you can get involved.

14. How can advocacy for low-income students, as individuals and as groups, help? Can we champion any changes being made that may lessen the impact of OBBB?

Please refer to the response in question 13. Additionally, it may be helpful to look at the policy website of various higher education associations to understand what they are conveying to the Congress and Administration on a range of policy issues important to higher education, including changes included in OBBB. Here is a link to ACE's [website](#) where you can find a drop-down menu with a spectrum of policy areas on which we focus containing letters, talking points, and other advocacy materials that may be useful.

15. How can we, as students, advocate more at the state level?

In addition to the answer to Question 14, the best way to advocate at any level, including in states, is to identify your elected officials – governors, state senators and representatives – and use various tools to communicate your concerns to them via email, online letter writing tools like Contact Congress (where applicable), social media, etc. and if possible, in person contact with them.

Public testimony is allowed by state and local legislatures, and anybody can sign up to testify. Look at calendars for public testimony for your state social services, sign up, and go share your story. The stories of people who are directly impacted are always much more powerful than those from professional advocates. Proposed legislation will also have an opportunity for public testimony. Following an advocacy coalition can help you stay up to date on when these hearings are held.

16. Please elaborate on the changes to benefits for foster care youth in OBBBA.

Pre-OBBBA: Youth (age ≤ 24) who had been in foster care under state responsibility at their 18th birthday (or higher age if state allows) were exempt from the ABAWD (able-bodied adults without dependents) time-limit/work requirement for SNAP.

Under OBBBA: That exemption is eliminated. Former foster-care youth who would have used that exemption must now fall under the standard ABAWD rule (unless some other exemption applies)

The statutory change appears in Section 10002 of H.R. 1.

17. How will the bill prepare students for their future jobs and whatever industry each individual student finds themselves in?

Beyond the changes to graduate loan options, the biggest change enacted in OBBB that will impact workforce training is the enactment of the Workforce Pell Grant which will for the first time open the Pell Grant, the federal government's primary grant for low-income students, to be used in short-term, non-degree workforce and certificate programs. This expansion of the Pell Grant is specifically targeted at expanding the use of Pell Grants to focus on short-term workforce training.

18. Do you anticipate another round of policy changes related to federal financial aid, SNAP, Medicare, etc, in the upcoming congressional session?

At present, I don't foresee other major legislative policy changes to federal financial aid programs in the current Congress.

19. What is an error rate and how is it calculated?

SNAP error rates is the sum (not net) of a state's overpayment (people who received too high of benefits) and underpayment (people who received too low of benefits) rates. Error rates are NOT fraud, but a measure of how accurate the state is at administering the correct benefits. Improper denials are not included in the error rate. In addition to the new rules in OBBBA, states already have to pay a fine based on their error rates.

States calculate error rates by taking a sample of cases and reviewing them for accuracy in determining eligibility and benefit amounts. The US Department of

Agriculture then reviews a subsample of these cases to verify the state's findings. The percentage of overpayments and underpayments found in the sample are then added together to determine the error rate. It is a measure of total dollar errors, not the number of cases with errors, so a few large, complicated cases can skew a state's error rate.

Measuring error rates was suspended during the COVID-19 public emergency to help state agencies implement changes that were made to SNAP during that time period, leading to higher than normal error rates when measuring resumed.

Pell

20. Will students be able to use workforce Pell and regular Pell at different stages in their educational career?

OBBB did not change the standard Pell Grant program, which only remains available to provide grant aid to low-income students at the undergraduate level. As noted previously, OBBB expanded the standard Pell Grant to cover short-term workforce and certificate programs which would support low-income students in job training and skills enhancement.

21. Do we know what % of students use Pell for non-tuition costs? Those students may be most affected if full tuition coverage ends Pell eligibility.

The cost of non-tuition higher education expenses has risen, so that now approximately 3 million students (about the population of Arkansas) receive aid that is subject to taxation because it is spent on non-tuition costs of attendance. In addition, according to the College Board, in the 2023-24 academic year, taxable higher education expenses make up:

- a. 78% of the cost of attendance for community college students;
- b. 57% for four-year (in-state) public institutions, and
- c. 30% for private, four-year nonprofit institutions.